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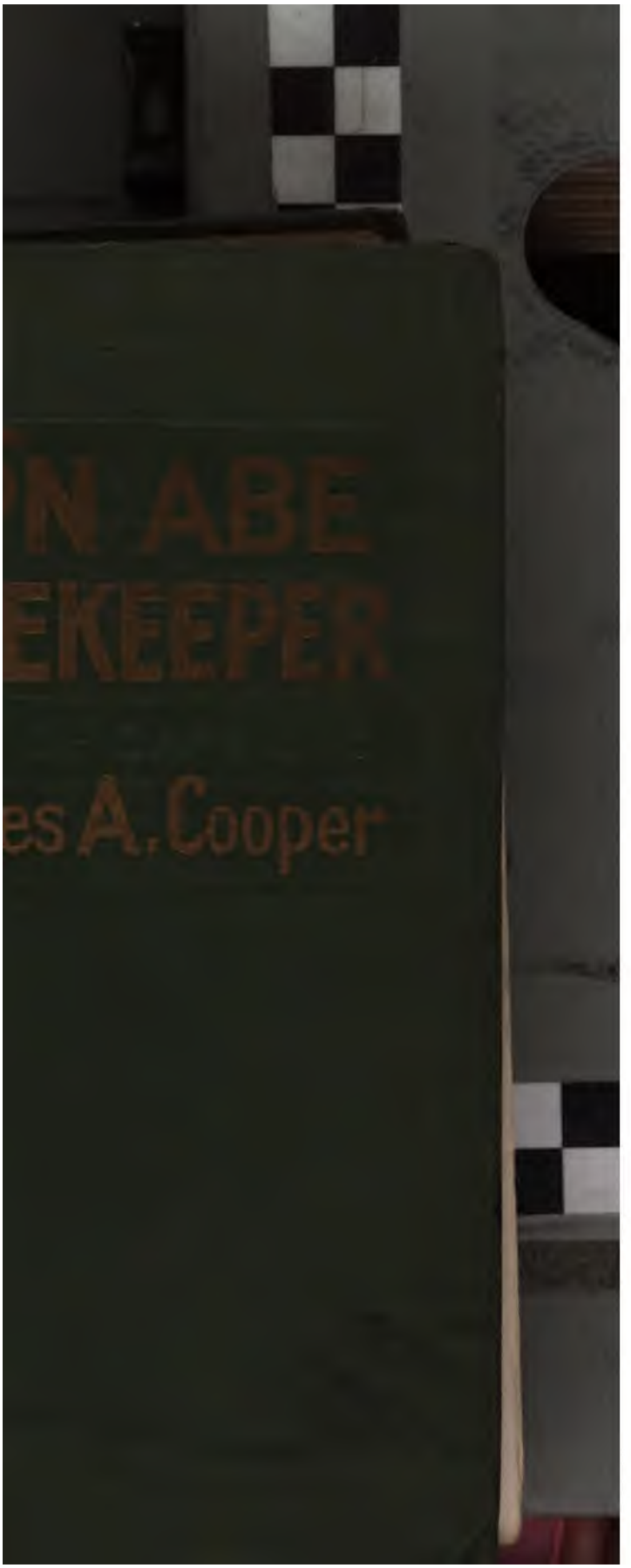
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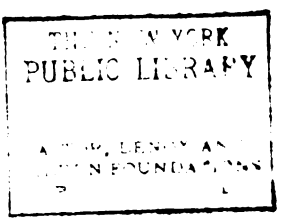
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Cap'n Abe, Storekeeper

CAP'N ABE, STOREKEEPER

A STORY OF CAPE COD

BY

JAMES A. COOPER

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. O. SCOTT

NEW YORK

SULLY AND KLEINTEICH

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CAP'N ABE, STOREKEEPI

CHAPTER I

A CHOICE

"Of course, my dear, there is nobody bu
Aunt Euphemia for you to go to!"

"Oh, daddy-professor! Nobody? Can w
or scrape up no other relative on either side
family who will take in poor little me for the
mer? You will be home in the fall, of cours

"That is the supposition," Professor Gr
replied, his lips pursed reflectively. "No.
me! there seems nobody."

"But Aunt Euphemia!"

"I know, Lou, I know. She expects you,
ever. She writes——"

"Yes. She has it all planned," sighed
Grayling dejectedly. "Every move at ho
abroad Aunt Euphemia has mapped out fo
When I am with her I am a mere automaton-
unlike a real marionette I can feel when sh
the strings!"

The professor shook his head. "The

there's only your poor mother's half-brc on the Cape."

"What half-brother?" demanded L a quick smile that matched the professor one.

"Why—— Well, your mother, Lc older half-brother, a Mr. Silt. He keep: Cardhaven. You know, I met your mc that way when I was hunting seaweed for sonian Institution. Your grandmother lows and her folks lived on the Cape, family has died out and your grandfathe before I married your mother. The h: this Mr. Silt—Captain Abram Silt—is t dividual of that branch of the family I believe."

"Goodness!" gasped the girl. "Wh: tree!"

Again the professor smiled whimsical a few of the branches. But they all re the first navigators of the world."

"The *first* navigators?"

"I do not mean to the Phœnicians,' said. "I mean that the world never nor more worthy sailors than those wh wind-swept hamlets of Cape Cod their The Silts were all master-mariners. ' Abe is a bachelor, I believe. You co well go there."

Louise sighed. "No; I couldn't go there—pose. I couldn't go there——" Her voic dered off into silence. Then suddenly, alm plosively, it came back with the question: couldn't I?"

"My dear Lou! What would your aunt gasped the professor.

He was a tall, rather soldierly looking ma result of military training in his youth—shock of perfectly white hair and a sweepin tache that contrasted clearly with his pink, cleanly shaven cheeks and chin. Without ir ing the observer with his muscular powe fessor Grayling was a better man on a lon and possessed more reserve strength than more beefy athletes.

His daughter had inherited his springy c and even the clean pinkness of his comple always looking as though she were fresh fr shower. But there was nothing mannish abo Grayling—nothing at all, though she had attributes of body and mind for which to tha father.

They were the best of chums. No fath daughter could have trod the odd corners world these two had visited without becom closely attached to each other that their pr of thought, as well as their opinions in mos ters, were almost in perfect harmony. Al

Mrs. Euphemia Conroth was the profess
sister he could appreciate Lou's attitude
emergency. While the girl was growing u
had been times when it was considered
usually because of her studies—for Lou to li
Aunt Euphemia. Indeed, that good lady t
it almost a sin that a young girl should att
professor on any of his trips into "the wil
she expressed it. Aunt Euphemia ignored t
that nowadays the railroad and telegraph
Thibet and that turbines ply the headwaters
Amazon.

Mrs. Conroth dwelt in Poughkeepsie—tha
way stop between New York and Albany; a
was as exclusive and opinionated a lady as
be found in that city of aristocracy and learn

The college in the shadow of which
Euphemia's dwelling basked, was that which
the professor's daughter under the lady's swa
though the girls with whom Lou associated
the college walls were up-to-the-minute—if
little ahead of it—she found her aunt, like
of those barnacles clinging to the outer re
learning in college towns, was really a foss
one desires to meet the ultraconservative in t
and social life let me commend him to this s
of humanity within stone's throw of a c
These barnacles like Aunt Euphemia are wed
a manner of thought, gained from their own

experiences, that went out of fashion ins
colleges thirty years ago.

Originally, in Lou Grayling's case, when s
lived with Aunt Euphemia and was a day
an exclusive preparatory school, it had been
into her by the lady that "children should
but not heard!" Later, although she acknov
the fact that young girls were now taugh
things that in Aunt Euphemia's maidenhoc
scarcely whispered within hearing of "the
person," the lady was quite shocked to he
subjects discussed in the drawing-room, w
niece as one of the discussers.

The structure of man and the lower a
down to the number of their ribs, seemed no
topic for light talk at an evening party. I
Aunt Euphemia gasp. Anatomy was Lou's
She was an excellent and practical taxic
thanks to her father. And she had learned t
the bones of the human frame along with he
plication table.

However, there was little about Louise G
to commend her among, for instance, the eru
Boston. She was sweet and wholesome, as h
indicated. She had all the common sense
pretty girl should have—and no more.

For she *was* pretty and, as well, own
charm of intelligence without which a wom
mere doll. Her father often reflected that t

who married Lou would be playing in grea
He would get a *mate.*

So far as Professor Grayling knew, h
(and he was as keenly observant of his da
and her development as he was of scientifi
ters), there was as yet no such man in sight
had escaped the usual boy-and-girl entangl
which fret the lives of many young folk, bec
her association with her father in his journey
the world. Being a perfectly normal, well-ba
girl, black boys, brown boys, yellow boys,
the hues and shades of boys to be met with i
odd corners of the earth where the white
at a premium, did not interest Lou Grayling
least.

Without being ultraconservative like
Euphemia, she was the sort of girl whom one
reckon on doing the sensible—perhaps the c
—thing in almost any emergency. Therefore
that single almost awed exclamation from th
fessor—his sole homage to Mrs. Grun
added:

"My dear, do as you like. You are old
and wise enough to choose for yourself-
aunt's opinion to the contrary notwithsta
Only, if you don't mind——"

"What is it, daddy-prof?" she asked hir
a smile, yet still reflective.

"Why, if you don't mind," repeated th

fessor, " I'd rather you didn't inform me whe
decide to spend your summer until I am off.
don't mind knowing after I am at sea—an
aunt cannot get at me."

She laughed at him gaily. " You take
granted that I am going to Cape Cod," sh
accusingly.

" No—o. But I know how sorely I sho
tempted myself, realizing your aunt's tryin
position."

" Perhaps this—this half-uncle may be q
trying."

" Impossible!" was the father's rather en
reply.

" What?" she cried. " Traitor to the
fame?"

" You do not know Cape Cod folk. I d
told her rather seriously. " Some of the
quaint and peculiar. I suppose there are
many down there with traits of extreme
frugality as elsewhere in New England. Bu
mother's people, as I knew them, were the ve
of the earth. Our wanderings were all tha
you from knowing the old folk before they
away."

" You tempt me," was all Louise said. Th
conversation lapsed.

It was the day following that the profess
to go to Boston preparatory to sailing. At t

ment of departure his daughter,
sealed note into his pocket.

" Don't open it, daddy-prof, t
sight of Cohasset Rocks," she
will not know where I am going
of your absence until it is too late
or to advise."

" You can't worry me," he told
tion in his glance. " I've every
my dear. Have a good time if yo

She watched him down the l
tween the trains. When she saw
the Pullman by the porter she tu
sigh, and walked up the rise tow
Street. She could almost wish sh
him, although seaweed and mollu
a messy business, and the vessel h
ancient converted coaster with
womenkind. Louise Grayling ha
city life for nearly a year now
crave new scenes.

There were some last things
nished apartment they were gi
trunks were to go to the storehous
gage was to be tagged and sent
boat.

For, spurred by curiosity as w
desire to escape Aunt Euphem
Louise was bent upon a visit t

r

ng, tucked a

u are out of
" Then you
end the time
ıer to oppose

vith admira-
ence in you,
"

latform be-
ıssisted into
vith a little
orty-second
going with
hering was
l in was an
mforts for
hobbled by
e began to

ıt the fur-
ıp. Some
r own bag-
Fall River

ırged by a
a season,
Cod. At

least, she would learn what manner o
only other living relative was—her m
brother, Captain Abram Silt.

In the train the next day, which wan
erratic caterpillar along the backbone
she began to wonder if, after all, she
ing that judgment which daddy-prof
so highly. It was too early in the se
" millionaire's special " to be schedul
those wealthy summer folk who have "
the Cape travel to and from Boston.
a local from Fall River that stopped
of bars and even hesitated at the pigp
right of way.

Getting aboard and getting off aga
numerable little stations, were people w
had never before seen. And their s
fully sprinkled with colloquialisms of
amused her, and sometimes puzzled h
the men who rode short distances in
fishermen's boots and jerseys. They c
ductor " skipper," and hailed each othe
idioms.

The women were not uncomely, r
dress in outlandish manner. Great is
the modern Catalogue House! But the
blunt and the three topics of conve
popular were the fish harvest, clammi
mer boarders.

"Land sakes! is that you, Em'line Scudder? What sent you cruisin' in these waters? I thought you never got away from the Haven."

"Good-day, Mrs. Eldredge. You're fairin' well? I just *had* to come over to Littlebridge for some fixin's. My boarders will be 'long and I got to freshen the house up a little."

"You goin' to have the same folks you had last year, Em'line?"

"Oh, yes. They're real nice—for city people. I tell Barzillai——"

"How *is* Barzillai?"

"Middlin'. His leg ain't never been just right since he was helpin' ice the *Tryout,* come two summers ago. You know, one o' them big cakes from the ice fact'ry fell on him. . . . I tell Barzillai th' city folks are a godsend to us Cape Codders summer time, now that sea-goin' don't seem pop'lar with the men as it useter be."

"I dunno. Some of these city folks don't to be sent by the Lord, but by the other fe' was the grim rejoinder. "I had tryin' tim' my crowd last summer; and the children v was a visitation—like the plagues of Egy'

Louise was an amused yet observan' She began thus early to gain what these ple themselves would call a "slant" characters and their outlook on life.

Aside from her interest in her f'

there were other things to engage the girl's attention. New places always appealed to her more than unfamiliar human beings; perhaps because she had seen so many of the latter in all quarters of the globe and found so little variety in their characters. There were good people and bad people everywhere, Louise had found. Greedy, generous, morose, and laughing; faithful and treacherous, the quick and the stupid; those likable at first meeting as well as those utterly impossible. Of whatever nation and color they might be, she had learned that under their skins they were all just human beings.

But Nature—ah! *she* was ever changing. This girl who had seen so much of the world had never seen anything quite like the bits of scene she observed from the narrow window of the car. Not beautiful, perhaps, but suggestive and provocative of *genre* pictures which would remain in her memory long afterward. There were woods and fields, cranberry bogs and sand dunes, between the hamlets; and always through the open window the salt tang of the air delighted her. She was almost prepared to say she was glad she had ventured when she left the train at Paulmouth and saw her trunks put off upon the platform.

A teetering stage, with a rack behind for light baggage, drawn by a pair of lean horses, waited beside the station. The stage had been freshened for the season with a thin coat of yellow paint.

The word "*Cardhaven*" was painted in bright blue letters on the doors of this ancient coach.

"No, ma'am! I can't possibly take your trunks," the driver said, politely explanatory. "Ye see, miss, I carry the mail this trip an' the parcel-post traffic is right heavy, as ye might say. . . . Belay that, Jerry!" he observed to the nigh horse that was stamping because of the pest of flies. "We'll cast off in a minute and get under way. . . . No, miss, I can't take 'em; but Perry Baker'll likely go over to the Haven to-night and he'll fetch 'em for ye. I got all the cargo I can load."

Soon the horses shacked out of town. The sandy road wandered through the pine woods where the hot June sunshine extracted the scent of balsam until its strength was almost overpowering. Louise, alone in the interior of the old coach, found herself pitching and tossing about as though in a heavy sea.

"It is fortunate I am a good sailor," she told herself, somewhat ruefully.

The driver was a large man in a yellow linen duster. He was not especially communicative—save to his horses. He told them frankly what he thought of them on several occasions! But "city folks" were evidently no novelty for him. As he put Louise and her baggage into the vehicle he had asked:

"Who you cal'latin' to stop with, miss?"

"I am going to Mr. Abram Silt's," Louise had told him.

"Oh! Cap'n Abe. Down on the Shell Road. I can't take ye that fur—ain't allowed to drive beyond the tavern. But 'tain't noways a fur walk from there."

He expressed no curiosity about her, or her business with the Shell Road storekeeper. That surprised Louise a little. She had presumed all these people would display Yankee curiosity.

It was not a long journey by stage, for which she was thankful. The noonday sun was hot and the interior of the turnout soon began to take on the semblance of a bake-oven. They came out at last on a wind-swept terrace and she gained her first unobstructed view of the ocean.

She had always loved the sea—its wideness, its mystery, its ever changing face. She watched the sweep of a gull following the crested windrow of the breakers on a near-by reef, busy with his fishing. All manner of craft etched their spars and canvas on the horizon, only bluer than the sea itself. Inshore was a fleet of small fry—catboats, sloops, dories under sail, and a smart smack or two going around to Provincetown with cargoes from the fish pounds.

"I shall like it," she murmured after a deeper breath.

They came to the outlying dwellings of Card-

haven; then to the head of Main Street that descended gently to the wharves and beaches of the inner harbor. Halfway down the hill, just beyond the First Church and the post-office, was the rambling, galleried old structure across the face of which, and high under its eaves, was painted the name "*Cardhaven Inn.*" A pungent, fishy smell swept up the street with the hot breeze. The tide was out and the flats were bare.

The coach stopped before the post-office, and Louise got out briskly with her bag. The driver, backing down from his seat, said to her:

"If ye wait till I git out the mail I'll drive ye inter the tavern yard in style. I bait the horses there."

"Oh, I'll walk," she told him brightly. "I can get dinner there, I suppose?"

"Warn't they expectin' you at Cap'n Abe's?" the stage driver asked. "I want to know! Oh, yes. You can buy your dinner at the tavern. But 'tain't a long walk to Cap'n Abe's. Not fur beyond the Mariner's Chapel."

Louise thanked him. A young man was coming down the steps of the post-office. He was a more than ordinarily good-looking young fellow, deeply tanned, with a rather humorous twist to his shaven lips, and with steady blue eyes. He was dressed in quite common clothing: the jersey, high boots, and sou'wester of a fisherman.

He looked at Louise, but not offensively. He did not remove his hat as he spoke.

"I heard Noah say you wished to go to Cap'n Abe's store," he observed with neither an assumption of familiarity nor any bucolic embarrassment. "I am bound that way myself."

"Thank you!" she said with just enough dignity to warn him to keep his distance if he chanced to be contemplating anything familiar. "But I shall dine at the hotel first."

A brighter color flooded into his cheeks and Louise felt that she might have been too sharp with him. She mended this by adding:

"You may tell me how to get to the Shell Road and Mr. Silt's, if you will be so kind."

He smiled at that. Really, he was an awfully nice-looking youth! She had no idea that these longshore fishermen would be so gentlemanly and so good looking.

"Oh, you can't miss it. Take the first left-hand street, and keep on it. Cap'n Abe's store is the only one beyond the Mariner's Chapel."

"Thank you," she said again and mounted the broad steps of the Inn. The young fellow hesitated as though he were inclined to enter too. But when Louise reached the piazza and glanced quickly down at him, he was moving on.

The cool interior of a broad hall with a stairway mounting out of it and a screened dining-

"How-do!" she said briskly. "Goin'

"Only for dinner," Louise said, sm
when she smiled her gray eyes made frier

"Almost over. But I'll run an' tell t
dish you up something hot. Come righ
an' wash. I'll fix you a table where it's
is 'bout the first hot day we've had."

She showed the visitor into the dre
and then bustled away. Later she hov
the table where Louise ate, the othe
having departed.

"My name's Gusty Durgin," she v
"I reckon you're one o' them movi
actresses they say are goin' to work do
Beaches this summer."

"What makes you think so?" ask
somewhat amused.

"Why—you kinder look it. I shoul
had 'screen charm.' Oh! I been readin
you folks for a long time back. I subscri

always gets the worst of it. But *you* must take lovely photographs."

"I'm not sure that I do," laughed Louise.

"Land sakes! Course you do. Them big eyes o' yourn must just look fetchin' in a picture. I don't believe I've ever seen you in a movie, have I, Miss——?"

"Grayling."

"'Grayling'! Ain't that pretty?" Gusty Durgin gave an envious sigh. "Is it your honest to goodness, or just your fillum name?"

"My 'honest to goodness,'" the visitor confessed, bubbling with laughter.

"Land sakes! I should have to change *mine* all right. The kids at school useter call me 'Dusty Gudgeon.' Course, my right name's Augusta; but nobody ever remembers down here on the Cape to call anybody by such a long name. Useter be a boy in our school who was named 'Christopher Columbus George Washington Marquis de Lafayette Gallup.' His mother named him that. But everybody called him 'Lafe'—after Lafayette, ye see.

"Land sakes! I should just *have* to change my name if I acted in the pictures. Your complexion's real, too, ain't it?" pursued this waitress with histrionic ambitions. "Real pretty, too, if 'tis high colored. I expect you have to make up for the pictures, just the same."

"I suppose I should. I believe it is always necessary to accentuate the lights and shadows for the camera."

"'Accentuate'—yep. That's a good word. I'll remember that," said Gusty. "You goin' to stay down to The Beaches long—and will you like it?"

"The Beaches?"

"That's where you'll work. At the Bozewell house. Swell bungalow. All the big bugs live along The Beaches."

"I am not sure just how long I shall stay," confessed Louise Grayling; "but I *know* I am going to like it."

CHAPTER II

CAP'N ABE

"I SEE by the *Globe* paper," Cap'n Abe observed, pushing up from his bewhiskered visage the silver-bowed spectacles he really did not need, "that them fellers saved from the wreck of the *Gilbert Gaunt* cal'late they went through something of an adventure."

"And they did," rejoined Cap'n Joab Beecher, "if they seen ha'f what they tell about."

"I dunno," the storekeeper went on reflectively, staring at a huge fishfly booming against one of the dusty window panes. "I dunno. Cap'n Am'zon was tellin' me once't about what he and two others went through with after the *Posy Lass,* out o' Bangor, was smashed up in a big blow off Hat'ras. What them fellers in the *Globe* paper tell about ain't a patch on what Cap'n Am'zon suffered."

There was an uncertain, troubled movement among Cap'n Abe's hearers. Even the fishfly stopped droning. Cap'n Beecher looked longingly through the doorway from which the sea could be observed as well as a strip of that natural breakwater called "The Neck," a barrier between the

tumbling Atlantic and the quiet bay around which the main village of Cardhaven was set.

All the idlers in the store on this June afternoon were not natives. There were several young fellows from The Beaches—on the Shell Road to which Cap'n Abe's store was a fixture. In sight of The Beaches the wealthy summer residents had built their homes—dwellings ranging in architectural design from the mushroom-roofed bungalow to a villa in the style of the Italian Renaissance.

The villa in question had been built by I. Tapp, the Salt Water Taffy King, and Lawford Tapp, only son of the house, was one of the audience in Cap'n Abe's store.

"Cap'n Am'zon said," boomed the storekeeper a good deal like the fishfly—"Cap'n Am'zon said the *Posy Lass* was loaded with lumber and her cargo's 'bout all that kep' her afloat as fur as Hat'ras. Then the smashin' big seas that come aboard settled her right down like a wounded duck.

"The deck load went o' course; and about ev'rything else was cleaned off the decks that warn't bolted to 'em. The seas rose up and picked off the men, one after t'other, like a person'd clean off a beach plum bush."

"I shouldn't wonder," spoke up Cap'n Beecher, "if we seen some weather 'fore morning."

He was squinting through the doorway at an azure and almost speckless sky. There was an un-

easy shuffling of boots. One of the boys from The Beaches giggled. Cap'n Abe—and the fishfly—boomed on together, the storekeeper evidently visualizing the scene he narrated and not the half-lighted and goods-crowded shop. At its best it was never well illumined. Had the window panes been washed there was little chance of the sunshine penetrating far save by the wide open door. On either hand as one entered were the rows of hanging oilskins, storm boots, miscellaneous clothing and ship chandlery that made up only a part of Cap'n Abe's stock.

There were blue flannel shirts dangling on wooden hangers to show all their breadth of shoulder and the array of smoked-pearl buttons. Brown and blue dungaree overalls were likewise displayed —grimly, like men hanging in chains. At the end of one row of these quite ordinary habiliments was one dress shirt with pleated bosom and cuffs as stiff as a board. Lawford Tapp sometimes speculated on that shirt—how it chanced to be in Cap'n Abe's stock and why it had hung there until the flies had taken title to it!

Centrally located was the stove, its four heavily rusted legs set in a shallow box which was sometimes filled with fresh sawdust. The stovepipe, guyed by wires to the ceiling, ran back to the chimney behind Cap'n Abe.

He stood at the one space that was kept cleared

on his counter, hairy fists on the brown, hacked plank—the notches of the yard-stick and fathom-stick cut with a jackknife on its edge—his pale eyes sparkling as he talked.

"There she wallered," went on the narrator of maritime disaster, "her cargo held together by rotting sheathing and straining ribs. She was wrung by the seas like a dishrag in a woman's hands. She no longer mounted the waves; she bored through 'em. 'Twas a serious time—to hear Cap'n Am'zon tell it."

"I guess it must ha' been, Abe," Milt Baker put in hastily. "Gimme a piece o' that Brown Mule chewin' tobacker."

"I'll *sell* it to ye, Milt," the storekeeper said gently, with his hand on the slide of the cigar and tobacco showcase.

"That's what I mean," rejoined Milt boldly, fishing in his pocket for the required nickel.

"For fourteen days while the *Posy Lass* was drivin' off shore before an easterly gale, Cap'n Am'zon an' two others, lashed to the stump o' the fo'mast, *ex*-isted in a smother of foam an' spume, with the waves picklin' 'em ev'ry few minutes. And five raw potaters was all they had to eat in all that endurin' time!"

"Five potatoes?" Lawford Tapp cried. "For three men? And for fourteen days? Good-*night!*"

Cap'n Abe stared at him for a moment, his eyes holding sparks of indignation. "Young man," he said tartly, "you should hear Cap'n Am'zon himself tell it. You wouldn't cast no doubts upon *his* statement."

Cap'n Joab snorted and turned his back again. Young Tapp felt somewhat abashed.

"Yes, sir!" proceeded Cap'n Abe who seldom lost the thread of one of his stories, "they was lashed to that stump of a mast and they lived on them potaters—scraping 'em fine with their sheath-knives, and husbandin' 'em like they was jewels. One of 'em went mad."

"One o' the potaters?" gasped Amiel Perdue.

"*Who* went crazy—your brother, Cap'n Abe?" Milt asked cheerfully. He had squandered a nickel in trying to head off the flow of the storekeeper's story, and felt that he was entitled to something besides the Brown Mule.

Cap'n Abe kept to his course apparently unruffled: "Cap'n Am'zon an' the other feller lashed the poor chap—han's *an'* feet—and so kep' him from goin' overboard. But mebbe 'twarn't a marciful act after all. When they was rescued from the *Posy Lass,* her decks awash and her slowly breakin' up, there warn't nothing could be done for the feller that had lost his mind. He was put straightaway into a crazy-house when they got to port.

"Now, them fellers saved from the *Gilbert Gaunt* didn't go through nothin' like that, it stands to reason. Cap'n Am'zon——"

Lawford Tapp was gazing out of the door beside Cap'n Joab, whose deeply tanned, whisker-fringed countenance wore an expression of disgust.

"I declare! I'd love to see this wonderful brother of his. He must have Baron Munchausen lashed to the post," the young man whispered.

"Never heard tell of that Munchausen feller," Cap'n Joab reflected. "Reckon he didn't sail from any of the Cape ports. But you let Abe tell it, Cap'n Am'zon Silt is the greatest navigator an' has the rip-snortin'est adventoors of airy deep-bottom sailor that ever chawed salt hoss."

"Did you ever see him?" Lawford asked.

"See who?"

"Cap'n Amazon?"

"No. I didn't never see him. But I've heard Cap'n Abe talk about him—standin' off an' on as ye might say—for twenty year and more."

"Odd you never met him, isn't it?"

"No. I never happened on Cap'n Am'zon when I was sea-farin'. And he ain't never been to Cardhaven to my knowledge."

"Never been here?" murmured Lawford Tapp more than a little surprised. "Wasn't he born and brought up here?"

"No. Neither was Cap'n Abe. The Silts flourish, as ye might say—or, useter 'fore the fam'ly sort o' petered out—down New Bedford way. Cap'n Abe come here twenty-odd year back and opened this store. He's as salt as though he'd been a haddocker since he was weaned. But he's always stuck mighty close inshore. Nobody ever seen him in a boat—'ceptin' out in a dory fishin' for tomcod in the bay, and on a mighty ca'm day at that."

"How does it come that he is called captain, then?" Lawford asked, impressed by Cap'n Beecher's scorn of the storekeeper.

The captain reflected, his jaws working spasmodically. "It's easy 'nough to pick up skipper's title longshore. 'Most ev'ry man owns some kind of a boat; and o' course a man's cap'n of his own craft—or 'doughter be. But I reckon Abe Silt airned his title honest 'nough."

"How?" urged Lawford.

"When Abe fust come here to Cardhaven there was still two-three wrecking comp'nies left on the Cape. Why, 'tain't been ten years since the Paulmouth Comp'ny wrecked the *Mary Benson* that went onto Sanders Reef all standin'. They made a good speck out o' the job, too.

"Wal, Abe bought into one o' the comp'nies—was the heaviest stockholder, in fac', so nat'rally was cap'n. He never headed no crew—not as I

ever heard on. But the title kinder stuck; and I don't dispute Abe likes it."

"But about his brother—this Captain Amazon?"

The line of Cap'n Joab Beecher's jaw, clean shaven above his whisker, looked very grim indeed, and he wagged his head slowly. "I don't know what to make of all this talk o' Cap'n Abe's," was his enigmatical reply.

Lawford turned to gaze curiously at the storekeeper. He certainly looked to be of a salt flavor, did Cap'n Abe Silt, though so many of his years had been spent behind the counter of this gloomy and cluttered shop. He was not a large man, nor commanding to look upon. His eyes were too mild for that—save when, perhaps, he grew excited in relating one of his interminable stories about Cap'n Amazon.

Cap'n Amazon Silt, it seemed, had been everything on sea and land that a mariner could be. No romance of the sea, or sea-going, was too remarkable to be capped by a tale of one of Cap'n Amazon's experiences. Some of these stories of wild and remarkable happenings, the storekeeper had told over and over again until they were threadbare.

Cap'n Abe's brown, gray-streaked beard swept the breast of his blue jersey. He was seldom seen without a tarpaulin on his head, and this had made his crown as bare and polished as a shark's tooth.

Under the bulk of his jersey he might have been either thin or deep-chested, for the observer could not easily judge. And nobody ever saw the storekeeper's sleeves rolled up or the throat-latch of his shirt open.

Despite the fact that he held a thriving trade in his store on the Shell Road (especially during the summer season) Cap'n Abe lived emphatically a lonely life. Twenty years' residence meant little to Cardhaven folk. Cap'n Abe was still an outsider to people who were so closely married and intermarried that every human being within five miles of the Haven (not counting the aristocrats of The Beaches) could honestly call each of the others cousin in some degree.

The house and store was set on a lonely stretch of road. It was unlighted at night, for the last street lamp had been fixed by the town fathers at the Mariner's Chapel, as though they said to all mundane illumination as did King Canute to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther."

Betty Gallup came cross lots each day to "rid up" Mr. Silt's living-room, which was behind the store, the chambers being overhead. She was gone home long before he put out the store lights and turned out the last lingering idler, for Cap'n Abe preferred to cook for himself. He declared the Widow Gallup did not know how to make a decent chowder, anyway; and as for lobscouse, or the

proper frying of a mess of "blood-ends," she was all at sea. He intimated that there were digestive reasons for her husband's death at the early age of sixty-eight.

Milt Baker had successfully introduced another topic of conversation, far removed it would seem from any adventurous happening connected with Cap'n Amazon Silt's career.

"I hear tell," said Milt, chewing Brown Mule with gusto, "that them folks cavortin' down on The Beaches for a week past is movin' picture actors. That so, Lawford?"

"There's a camera man and a director, and several handy men arrived," the son of the Salt Water Taffy King replied. "They are going to use Bozewell's house for some pictures. The Bozewells are in Europe."

"But ain't none of the actorines come?" demanded Milt, who was a sad dog—let him tell it! He had been motorman on a street car in Providence for a couple of winters before he married Mandy Card, and now tried to keep green his reputation for sophistication.

"I believe not," Lawford answered, with reflection. "I presume the company will come later. The director is taking what he calls 'stills' of the several localities they propose using when the films are really made."

"One of 'em told me," chuckled Amiel Perdue,

"that they was hopin' for a storm, so's to get a real wreck in the picture."

"Hoh!" snorted Cap'n Joab. "Fine time o' year to be lookin' for a no'theaster on the Cape."

"And do they reckon a craft'll drift right in here if there *is* a storm an' wrack herself to please 'em?" piped up Washy Gallup—no relation to Betty save through interminable cross-currents of Card and Baker blood.

"Sometimes them fillum fellers buy a boat an' wreck it a-purpose. Look what they did to the old *Morning Star,*" Milt said. "I read once of a comp'ny putting two locomotives on one track an' running 'em full-tilt together so's to get a picture of the smashup."

"Crazy critters!" muttered Cap'n Joab.

"But wait till ye see the fillum actresses," Milt chuckled. "Tell ye what, boys, some of 'em'll make ye open your eyes!"

"Ye better go easy, Milt, 'bout battin' *your* eyes," advised Amiel Perdue. "Mandy ain't lost her eyesight none either."

Washy's thin whine broke through the guffaw: "I seen a picture at Paulmouth once't about a feller and a girl lost in the woods o' Borneo. It was a stirrin' picture. They was chased by head-hunters, and one o' these here big man-apes tackled 'em—what d'ye call that critter now? Suthin' like ringin' a bell."

"Orang-outang," suggested Lawford.

"That's it. Sounds jest like the Baptist Meetin' House bell. It's cracked."

"Them orang-outangs don't sound like no bell—not when they holler," put in Cap'n Abe, leaning on his counter and staring at the tireless fishfly again. "Cap'n Am'zon Silt, when he was ashore once't in Borneo, met one o' them critters."

"Gosh all fishhooks!" ejaculated Milt. "Ain't there no place on this green airth that brother o' yourn ain't been, Cap'n Abe?"

"He ain't never been in jail, Milt," said the storekeeper mildly, and the assembly broke into an appreciative chuckle. It was well known that on the last Fourth of July Milt Baker had been shut into the calaboose at Paulmouth to sober up.

"As I was sayin'," pursued Cap'n Abe reflectively, "Cap'n Am'zon went up country with a Dutchman—a trader, I b'lieve he said the man was—and they got into a part where the orang-outangs was plentiful."

"Jest as thick as sandpipers along The Beaches, I shouldn't wonder," put in Cap'n Joab, at last tempted beyond his strength.

"No; nor like mackerel when ye get a full seine-haul," responded the storekeeper, unruffled, "but thicker'n you'd want sand fleas to be if the fleas measured up to the size of orang-outangs."

Lawford Tapp burst into open laughter. "They

can't catch you, can they, Cap'n Abe?" he said. "If that brother of yours has gone through one-half the perils by land and sea I've heard you tell about, he's beat out most sailors from old Noah down to Admiral Dewey."

Cap'n Abe's brows came together in pronounced disapproval. "Young man," he said, "if Cap'n Am'zon was here now ye wouldn't darst cast any aspersions on his word. He ain't the man to stand for't."

"Well, I'd like to see Cap'n Amazon," Lawford said lightly, "if only for the sake of asking him a question or two."

"You'll likely get your wish," returned the storekeeper tartly.

"What d'ye mean?" drawled Milt Baker, who always bobbed up serenely. "Ye don't say Cap'n Am'zon's likely to show up here at Cardhaven after all these years?"

There was barely a second's hesitation on Mr. Silt's part. Then he said: "That's exactly what I mean. I got a—ahem!—a letter from Cap'n Am'zon only lately."

"And he's comin' to see ye?" gasped Cap'n Joab, turning from the door to stare like the others at the storekeeper.

"Yes," the latter confessed. "And he's likely to stay quite a spell when he does come. Says suthin' 'bout settlin' down. He's gettin' along in

years like the rest of us. Mebbe I'll let him keep store for me this summer whilst I take a vacation," added Cap'n Abe more briskly, "like I been wantin' to do for a long spell back."

"You took a vacation of a week or more about—was it ten year ago?" demanded Cap'n Joab. "I looked after the place for ye then."

"Ahem! I mean a real vacation," Cap'n Abe declared, still staring at the fishfly now feebly butting its head against the pane. "That week was when I went to the—'hem—buryin' of my a'nt, Joab. I'll go this time mebbe for two-three months. Take a v'y'ge somewhere. I've always wanted to."

"Land sakes!" exploded Cap'n Joab. "I know ye been talkin' 'bout cruisin' around—to see your folks, or the like—for the longest spell. But I didn't s'pose ye re'lly meant it. And your brother comin', too! Well!"

"If he can tell of his adventures as well as you relate them," laughed Lawford, "Cap'n Amazon should be an addition to the Cardhaven social whirl."

"You take my advice, young man," Cap'n Abe said, with sternness, "and belay that sort o' talk afore Cap'n Am'zon when he does come. He's lived a rough sort o' life. He's nobody's tame cat. Doubt his word and he's jest as like as not to take ye by the scruff of the neck and duck ye in the water butt."

There was a general laugh. Almost always the storekeeper managed to turn the tables in some way upon any doubting Thomas that drifted into his shop. Because of his ability in this particular he had managed to hold his audience all these years.

Lawford could think of no reply with which to turn the laugh. His wit was not of a nimble order. He turned to the door again and suddenly a low ejaculation parted his lips.

"There's that girl again!"

Milt Baker screwed his neck around for a look. "See who's come!" he cackled. "I bet it's one o' them moving picture actresses."

Lawford cast on the ribald Milt a somewhat angry glance. Yet he did not speak again for a moment.

"Tidy craft," grunted Cap'n Joab, eying the young woman who was approaching the store along the white road.

"I saw her get out of Noah's ark when he landed at the post-office this noon," Lawford explained to Cap'n Joab. "She looks like a nice girl."

"Trim as a yacht," declared the old man admiringly.

She was plainly city bred—and city gowned—and she carried her light traveling bag by a strap over her shoulder. Her trim shoes were dusty from her walk and her face was pink under her wide hat brim.

Lawford stepped out upon the porch. His gaze was glued again to this vision of young womanhood; but as he stood at one side she did not appear to see him as she mounted the steps.

The heir of the Salt Water Taffy King was twenty-four, his rather desultory college course behind him; and he thought his experience with girls had been wide. But he had never seen one just like Louise Grayling. He was secretly telling himself this as she made her entrance into Cap'n Abe's store.

CHAPTER III

IN CAP'N ABE'S LIVING-ROOM

LOUISE came into the store smiling and the dusty, musty old place seemed actually to brighten in the sunshine of her presence. Her big gray eyes (they were almost blue when their owner was in an introspective mood) now sparkled as her glance swept Cap'n Abe's stock-in-trade—the shelves of fly-specked canned goods and cereal packages, with soap, and starch, and half a hundred other kitchen goods beyond; the bolts of calico, gingham, "turkey red," and mill-ends; the piles of visored caps and boxes of sunbonnets on the counter; the ship-lanterns, coils of rope, boathooks, tholepins hanging in wreaths; bailers, clam hoes, buckets, and the thousand and one articles which made the store on the Shell Road a museum that later was sure to engage the interest of the girl.

Now, however, the clutter of the shop gained but fleeting notice from Louise. Her gaze almost immediately fastened upon the figure of the be-

Louise Grayling as almost childish, it was so kindly.

Cap'n Joab had dodged through the door after Lawford Tapp. The other boys from The Beaches followed their leader. Old Washy Gallup and Amiel Perdue suddenly remembered that it was almost chore time as this radiant young woman said:

"I wish to see Mr. Abram Silt—*Captain* Silt. Is he here?"

"I'm him, miss," Cap'n Abe returned politely.

Milt Baker surely would have remained of all the crowd of idlers, gaping oilily at the visitor across the top of the rusty stove, had not a shrill feminine voice been heard outside the store.

"Is Milt Baker there? Ain't none o' you men seen him? Land sakes! he's as hard to hold as the greased pig on Fourth o' July—an' jest 'bout as useful."

"Milt," said Cap'n Abe suggestively, "I b'lieve I hear Mandy callin' you."

"I'm a-comin'!—I'm a-comin', Mandy!" gurgled Milt, cognizant of the girl's gay countenance turned upon him.

"What did you want, miss?" asked Cap'n Abe, as the recreant husband of the militant Mandy stumbled over his own feet getting out of the store.

Louise bubbled over with laughter; she could not help it. Cap'n Abe's bearded countenance broke slowly into an appreciative grin.

"Yes," he said, "she does have him on a leadin' string. I do admit Mandy's a *card.*"

The girl, quick-witted as she was bright looking, got his point almost at once. "You mean she was a Card before she married him?"

"And she's a Card yet," Cap'n Abe said, nodding. "Guess you know a thing or two, yourself. What can I do for you?"

"You can say: 'Good-evening, Niece Louise,'" laughed the girl, coming closer to the counter upon which the storekeeper still leaned.

"Land sakes!"

"My mother was a Card. That is how I came to see your joke, Uncle Abram."

"Land sakes!"

"Don't you believe me?"

"I—I ain't got but one niece in the world," mumbled Cap'n Abe. "An'—an' I never expected to see *her.*"

"Louise Grayling, daughter of Professor Ernest Grayling and Miriam Card—your half-sister's child. See here—and here." She snapped open her bag, resting it on the counter, and produced an old-fashioned photograph of her mother, a letter, yellowed by time, that Cap'n Abe had written Professor Grayling long before, and her own accident policy identification card which she always carried.

Cap'n Abe stretched forth a hairy hand, and it closed on Lou's as a sunfish absorbs its prey. The

girl's hand to her wrist was completely lost in the grip; but despite its firmness Cap'n Abe's handclasp was by no means painful. He released her and, leaning back, smiled benignly.

"Land sakes!" he said again. "I'm glad to see little Mirry's girl. An' you do favor her a mite. But I guess you take mostly after the Graylings."

"People say I am like my father."

"An' a mighty nice lookin' man—*an'* a pleasant—as I remember him," Cap'n Abe declared. "Come right in here, into my sittin'-room, Niece Louise, an' lemme take a look at you. Land sakes!"

He lifted the flap in the counter to let her through. The doorway beyond gave entrance to a wide hall, or "entry," between the store and the living-room. The kitchen was in a lean-to at the back. The table in the big room was already spread with a clean red-and-white checked tablecloth and set with heavy chinaware for a meal. A huge caster graced the center of the table, containing glass receptacles for salt, red and black pepper, catsup, vinegar, and oil. Knives, forks, and spoons for two—all of utilitarian style—were arranged with mathematical precision beside each plate.

In one window hung a pot with "creeping jew" and inchplant, the tendrils at least a yard long. In the other window was a blowzy-looking canary in

a cage. A corpulent tortoise-shell cat occupied the turkey-red cushion in one generous rocking chair. There was a couch with a faded patchwork coverlet, several other chairs, and in a glass-fronted case standing on the mantlepiece a model of a brigantine in full sail, at least two feet tall.

"Sit down," said Cap'n Abe heartily. "Drop your dunnage right down there," as Louise slipped the strap of her bag from her shoulder. "Take that big rocker. Scat, you, Diddimus! and let the young lady have your place."

"Oh, don't bother him, Uncle Abram. What a beauty he is," Louise said, as the tortoise-shell—without otherwise moving—opened one great, yellow eye.

"He's a lazy good-for-nothing," Cap'n Abe said mildly. "Friends with all the mice on the place, I swan! But sometimes he's the only human critter I have to talk to. 'Cept Jerry."

"Jerry?"

"The bird," explained Cap'n Abe, easing himself comfortably into a chair, his guest being seated, and resting his palms on his knees as he gazed at her out of his pale blue eyes. "He's a lot of comfort —Jerry. An' he useter be a great singer. Kinder gittin' old, now, like the rest of us.

"Does seem too bad," went on Cap'n Abe reflectively, "how a bird like him has got to live in a cage all his endurin' days. Jerry's a prisoner—

like I been. *I* ain't never had the freedom I wanted, Miss——"

"Louise, please, Uncle Abram. Lou Grayling," the girl begged, but smiling.

"Then just you call me Cap'n Abe. I'm sort o' useter that," the storekeeper said.

"Of course I will. But why haven't you been free?" she asked, reverting to his previous topic. "Seems to me—down here on the Cape where the sea breezes blow, and everything is open——"

"Yes, 'twould seem so," Cap'n Abe said, but he said it with hesitation. "I been some hampered all my life, as ye might say. 'Tis something that was bred in me. But as for Jerry——

"Jerry was give to me by a lady when he was a young bird. After a while I got thinkin' a heap about him bein' caged, and one sunshiny day—it was a marker for days down here on the Cape, an' we have lots on 'em! One sunshiny day I opened his door and opened the window, and I says: 'Scoot! The hull world's yourn!'"

"And didn't he go?" asked the girl, watching the rapt face of the old man.

"Did he go? Right out through that window with a song that'd break your heart to hear, 'twas so sweet. He pitched on the old apple tree yonder —the August sweet'nin'—and I thought he'd bust his throat a-tellin' of how glad he was to be free out there in God's sunshine an' open air."

"He came back, I see," said Louise thoughtfully.

"That's just it!" cried Cap'n Abe, shaking his head till the tarpaulin fell off and he forgot to pick it up. "That's just it. He come back of his own self. I didn't try to ketch him. When it grew on toward sundown an' the air got kinder chill, I didn't hear Jerry singin' no more. I'd seen him, off'n on, flittin' 'bout the yard all day. When I come in here to light the hangin'-lamp cal'latin' to make supper, I looked over there at the window. I'd shut it. There was Jerry on the window sill, humped all up like an old woman with the tisic."

"The poor thing!" was Lou's sympathetic cry.

"Yes," said Cap'n Abe, nodding. "He warn't no more fit to be let loose than nothin' 'tall. And I wonder if *I* be," added the storekeeper. "I've been caged quite a spell now.

"But now tell me, Niece Louise," he added with latent curiosity, "how did you find your way here?"

"Father says—'Daddy-professor,' you know is what I call him. He says if we had not always been traveling when I was not at school, I should have known you long ago. He thinks very highly of my mother's people."

"I wanter know!"

"He says you are the 'salt of the earth'—that is his very expression."

"Yes. We're pretty average salt, I guess," ad-

mitted Cap'n Abe. "I never seen your father but once or twice. You see, Louise, your mother was a lot younger'n me an' Am'zon."

"Who?"

"Cap'n Am'zon. Oh! *I* ain't the only uncle you got," he said, watching her narrowly. "Cap'n Am'zon Silt——"

"Have I another relative? How jolly!" exclaimed Louise, clasping her hands.

"Ye-as. Ain't it? Jest," Cap'n Abe said. "Ahem! your father never spoke of Cap'n Am'zon?"

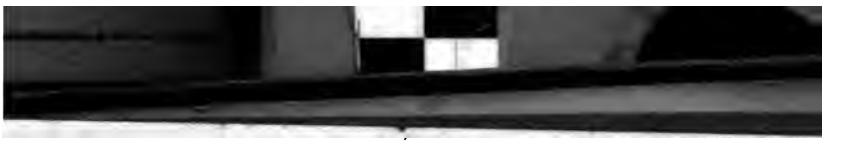
"I don't believe daddy-prof even knew there was such a person."

"Mebbe not. Mebbe not," Cap'n Abe agreed hastily. "And not to be wondered at. You see, Am'zon went to sea when he was only jest a boy."

"Did he?"

"Yep. Ran away from home—like most boys done in them days, for their mothers warn't partial to the sea—and shipped aboard the whaler *South Sea Belle*. He tied his socks an' shirt an' a book o' navigation he owned, up in a handkerchief, and slipped out over the shed roof one night, and away he went." Cap'n Abe told the girl this with that far-away look on his face that usually heralded one of his tales about Cap'n Amazon.

"I can remember it clear 'nough. He walked all the way to New Bedford. We lived at Rocky



Head over against Bayport. 'Twas quite a step to Bedford. The *South Sea Belle* was havin' hard time makin' up her crew. She warn't a new ship. Am'zon was twelve year old an' looked fifteen. An' he *was* fifteen 'fore he got back from that v'y'ge. Mebbe I'll tell ye 'bout it some time—or Cap'n Am'zon will. He's been a deep-bottom sailor from that day to this."

"And where is he now?" asked Louise.

"Why—mebbe!—he's on his way here. I shouldn't wonder. He might step in at that door any minute," and Cap'n Abe's finger indicated the store door.

There was the sound of a footstep entering the store as he spoke. The storekeeper arose. "I'll jest see who 'tis," he said.

While he was absent Louise laid aside her hat and made a closer inspection of the room and its furniture. Everything was homely but comfortable. There was a display of marine art upon the walls. All the ships were drawn exactly, with the stays, spars, and all rigging in place, line for line. They all sailed, too, through very blue seas, the crest of each wave being white with foam.

Flanking the model of the brigantine on the mantle were two fancy shell pieces—works of art appreciated nowhere but on the coast. The designs were ornate; but what they could possibly represent Louise was unable to guess.

She tried to interest the canary by whistling to him and sticking her pink finger between the wires of his cage. He was ruffled and dull-eyed like all old birds of his kind, and paid her slight attention. When she turned to Diddimus she had better success. He rolled on his side, stuck all his claws out and drew them in again luxuriously, purring meanwhile like a miniature sawmill.

When Cap'n Abe came back the girl asked: "Wasn't your customer a young man I saw on the porch as I came in?"

"Yep. Lawford Tapp. Said he forgot some matches and a length o' ropeyarn. I reckon you went to that young man's head. And his top hamper ain't none too secure, Niece Louise."

"Oh, did I?" laughed the girl, understanding perfectly. "How nice."

"Nice? That's how ye take it. Lawford Tapp ain't a fav'rite o' mine."

"But he seemed very accommodating to-day when I asked him how to reach your store."

"So you met him up town?"

"Yes, Uncle Abe."

"He's perlite enough," scolded the storekeeper. "But I don't jest fancy the cut of his jib. Wanted to know if you was goin' to stop here."

"Oh!" exclaimed Louise. "That is what I want to know myself. Am I?"

CHAPTER IV

THE SHADOW OF COMING EVENTS

CAP'N ABE reached for his spectacles and pulled them down upon his nose to look at his guest through the lenses. Not that they aided his sight in the least; but the act helped to cover the fact that he was startled.

"Stop here?" he repeated. "Where's your father? Ain't he with you up to the Inn?"

"No, Cap'n Abe. He is in Boston to-day. But he will sail to-morrow for a summer cruise with a party for scientific research. I am all alone. So I came down here to Cape Cod."

Louise said it directly and as simply as the storekeeper himself might have spoken. Yet it seemed really difficult for Cap'n Abe to get her meaning into his head.

"You mean you was intendin' to cast anchor here—with *me?*"

"If it is agreeable. Of course I'll pay my board if you'll let me. You have a room to spare, haven't you?"

"Land sakes, yes!"

"And I am not afraid to use my hands. I might

even be of some slight use," and she smiled at him till his own slow smile responded, troubled and amazed though he evidently was by her determination. "I've roughed it a good deal with daddy-prof. I can cook—some things. And I can do housework——"

"Bet Gallup does that," interposed Cap'n Abe, finally getting his bearings. "Hi-mighty, ye did take me aback all standin', Niece Louise! Ye did, for a fac'. But why not? Land sakes, there's room enough, an' to spare! Ye don't hafter put them pretty han's to housework. Betty Gallup'll do all that. An' you don't have to pay no board money. As for cookin'—— That remin's me. I'd better git to work on our supper. We'll be sharp for it 'fore long."

"And—and I may stay?" asked Louise, with some little embarrassment now. "You are sure it won't inconvenience you?"

"Bless you, no! I cal'late it's more likely to inconvenience *you*," and Cap'n Abe chuckled mellowly. "I don't know what sort o' 'roughin' it' you've done with your pa; but if there's anything much rougher than an ol' man's housekeepin' down here on the Cape, it must be pretty average rough!"

She laughed gayly. "You can't scare me!"

"Ain't a-tryin' to," he responded, eying her admiringly. "You're an able seaman, I don't dis-

pute. An' we'll git along fine. Hi-mighty! there's Am'zon!"

Louise actually turned around this time to look at the door, expecting to see the mariner in question enter. Then she said, half doubtfully:

"Do you suppose your brother will object if he does come, Cap'n Abe?"

"Land sakes, no!" the storekeeper quickly assured her. "'Tain't that. But I cal'lated 'bout soon's Am'zon anchored here I'd cast off moorin's myself."

"Go away?" Louise demanded.

"Yes. Like poor old Jerry, mebbe," said Cap'n Abe, looking at the caged bird. "Mebbe I'll be glad to come back again—and in a hurry. But while Cap'n Am'zon is here I can take a vacation that I've long hankered for, Niece Louise. I—I got my plans all made."

"Don't for one moment think of changing them on my account," Louise said briskly. "I shall like Uncle Amazon immensely if he's anything like you, Cap'n Abe."

"He—he ain't so *much* like me," confessed the storekeeper. "Not in looks he ain't. But hi-mighty! I know he'll be as pleased as Punch to see ye."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Wait till you see how he takes to ye," declared

her reassuring uncle. "Now, lemme git my apern on and set to work on supper."

"Can't I help, Cap'n Abe?"

"In *them* things?" the storekeeper objected.

"Well—I'll have plenty of house dresses when my trunks come. I left my checks at the station for a man named Perry Baker. They said he'd bring them over to-night."

"He will," Cap'n Abe assured her. But he stopped a moment, stock-still in the middle of the room, and stared at her unseeingly. Evidently his mind was fixed upon an idea suddenly suggested by her speech. "He will," he repeated. Then:

"I'll get the fat kettle over an' the fry-cage ready. Amiel brought me a likely cod. 'Tain't been out o' the water two hours."

"I love fish," confessed Louise, following him to the kitchen door.

"Lucky you do, if you're going to stay a spell on Cape Cod. For that's what you'll eat mornin', noon, *and* night. Fish and clams, an' mebbe a pot o' baked beans on a Saturday, or a chicken for Sunday's dinner. I don't git much time to cook fancy."

"But can't this woman who comes to do the work cook for you?"

"She can't cook for *me*," snorted Cap'n Abe. "I respect my stomach too much to eat after Bet Gallup. She's as good a man afore the mast as airy

feller in Cardhaven. An' that's where she'd oughter be. But never let her in the galley."

"Oh, well," Louise said cheerfully. "I'm a dab at camp cooking myself, as I told you. Uncle Amazon and I will make out—if he comes."

"Oh! Ah! 'Hem!" said Cap'n Abe, clearing his throat. He stooped to pick up a dropped pot-lid and came up very red in the face. "You needn't borrow any trouble on that score. Cap'n Am'zon's as good a cook as I be."

Only twice did Cap'n Abe make forced trips into the shop. The supper hour of Cardhaven was well established and the thoughtful housewives did not seek to make purchases while the fat was hot in Cap'n Abe's skillet. One of these untimely customers was a wandering child with a penny. "I might have waited on him, Cap'n Abe," Louise declared.

"Land sakes! so you might," the storekeeper agreed. "Though if he'd seen you behind my counter I reckon that young 'un of 'Liathel Grummet's would have been struck dumber than nature made him in the fust place."

The other customer was a gangling, half-grown youth after a ball of seine twine and the girl heard him say in a shocked whisper to Cap'n Abe:

"Say! is it true there's one o' them movin' picture actresses goin' to stop here with you, Cap'n Abe? Ma heard so."

"You tell your ma," Cap'n Abe said sternly, "that if she keeps on stretchin' her ears that a-way, she'll hear the kambuoy over Bartell Shoals in a dead calm!"

Cap'n Abe's bald poll began to shine with minute beads of perspiration. He looked over the bib of his voluminous apron like a bewhiskered gnome very busy at some mysterious task. Louise noticed that his movements about the kitchen were remarkably deft.

"All hands called!" he called out at length. "I'm about to dish up."

"Shall I put on another plate, Cap'n Abe? You expected somebody else to supper?"

"Nope. All set. I'm always ready for a messmate; but 'tain't often one boards me 'cept Cap'n Joab now and then. His woman likes to git him out from under foot. You see, when a woman's been useter seein' her husband only 'twixt v'y'ges for forty year, I 'spect 'tis something of a cross to have him litterin' up the house ev'ry day," he confessed. "But as I can't leave the shop myself to go visitin' much in return, Joab acks offish. We Silts was always bred to be hospitable. Poor or rich, we could share what we had with another. So I keep an extry plate on the table.

"I've had occasion," pursued the philosophical storekeeper, drawing up his own chair across the table from the girl, "to be at some folks' houses at

meal time and had 'em ask me to set up and have a bite. But it never looked to me as if they meant it 'nless there was already an extry plate there.

"Just like having a spare bedroom. If you can say: 'Stay all night, we got a room for ye,' then *that's* what I call hospitality. I wouldn't live in a house that warn't big enough to have at least one spare room."

"I believe I must be very welcome here, Cap'n Abe," Louise said, smiling at the kindly old man.

"Land sakes, I sh'd hope ye felt so!" ejaculated Cap'n Abe. "Now, if you don't mind, Niece Louise." He dropped his head suddenly and closed his eyes in reverence. "For what we are about to partake of, Lord, make us duly thankful. Amen!" His countenance became animated again. "Try them biscuit. I made 'em this morning 'twixt Marcy Coe selectin' that piece of gingham for a new dress and John Peckham buying cordage for his smack. But they warmed up right nice in the oven."

Meanwhile he heaped her plate with codfish and fried potatoes cooked to a delicate brown. There was good butter, fat doughnuts, and beach-plum preserve. It was a homely meal but Louise ate it graciously. Already the air of Cardhaven had sharpened her appetite.

"Lend me your apron," insisted the girl when they had finished, "and I will wash these dishes."

"I us'ally let them go till Betty Gallup comes in the morning," the storekeeper said rather ruefully. "It don't look right to me that you should mess with these greasy dishes jest as we get under way, as ye might say."

"You must not make company of me, Cap'n Abe," Louise declared. "There, I hear a customer in the store," and she gave him a little pat on the shoulder as he delivered the huge apron into her hand.

"I dunno," he said, smiling upon her quizzically, "as I shall really want to cast off if Cap'n Am'zon *does* come. Seems to me 'twould be hi-mighty nice to have a girl like you around the place, Louise."

"Then don't go," she said, briskly beginning to clear off. "*I* sha'n't mind having two of you for me to boss. Two captains! Think of it."

"Yes. I know. But I got all my plans laid," he murmured, and then went slowly into the store.

There seemed to be some briskness in the after-supper trade, and Louise suspected that it was founded upon the news of her arrival at Cap'n Abe's store. Several of his rather tart rejoinders reached her ears as she went from kitchen to living-room and back again. Finally removing the apron, her task done, she seated herself with Diddimus in her lap within the radiance of the lamp and within hearing of all that was said in the store.

"No. I dunno's I ever did tell ye quite all my

business, Joab. Some things I missed, includin' the list of my relations."

"Yes, I hear tell most of these movin' picture actresses are pretty, Miz' Peckham. They pick 'em for that puppose, I shouldn't wonder. I didn't ask her what part she was goin' to play—*if* any."

"Land sakes, Mandy, she's just got here! I ain't no idee how long she'll stay. If you think there's any danger of Milt not tendin' to his clammin' proper whilst she's here you'd better send him on a cruise with Cap'n Durgin. The *Tryout* sails for the Banks to-morrow, I understand."

"No, Washy. That was my A'nt Matildy I went away to help bury ten years ago. She's still dead—an' this ain't her daughter. This is my ha'f sister's child, she that was Miriam Card. She got married to a scientific chap that works for the government. I guess when you write to Washington for your garden seeds next spring, you better ask about him, if ye want to know more'n *I* can tell ye."

"You got it right for once't, Joab. I do expect Cap'n Am'zon. Mebbe to-night. He may come over from the depot with Perry Baker—I can't tell. What'll I do with the girl? Land sakes! ain't Cap'n Am'zon just as much her uncle as *I* be? Some o' you fellers better stow your jaw-tackle if Cap'n Am'zon does heave to here. For he ain't no tame cat, like I told you."

"You back again, Lawford Tapp? Hi-mighty! what you forgot this time? Fishhooks? Goin' fishin', be you? Wal, in my 'pinion you're throwin' your hook into unproductive waters around here, as ye might say. Even chummin' won't sarve ye. *Good*-night!"

After getting rid of this importunate customer, Cap'n Abe closed his door and put out his store lights—an hour earlier than usual—and came back to sit down with Louise. His visage was red and determination sat on his brow.

"I snum!" he emphatically observed. "Cardhaven folks seem bit with some kind o' bug. Talk 'bout curiosity! 'Hem! I dunno what Cap'n Am'zon'll think of 'em."

"*I* think they are funny," Louise retorted, her laughter bubbling up again.

"Likely it looks so to you," said Cap'n Abe. "They're pretty average funny I do guess to a stranger, as ye might say. But after you've summered 'em and wintered 'em for twenty-odd years like I have, land sakes! the humor's worn hi-mighty thin!"

CHAPTER V

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE NIGHT

CAP'N ABE produced a pipe. He looked at his niece tentatively. "Do—do you mind tobacker smoke?"

"Daddy-prof is an inveterate," she laughed.

"Huh? An—an invet'rate *what?*"

"Smoker. I don't begrudge a man smoking tobacco as long as we women have our tea. A nerve tonic in both cases."

"I dunno for sure that I've got any nerves," Cap'n Abe said, the corners of his eyes wrinkling. "Mebbe I was behind the door when they was given out. But a pipeful o' tobacker this time o' the evening *does* seem sort o' satisfyin'. That, and knittin'."

Having filled his pipe and lit it, he puffed a few times to get it well alight and then reached for a covered basket that Louise had noticed on a small stand under Jerry's cage. He drew from this a half-fashioned gray stocking that was evidently intended for his own foot and the needles began to click in his strong, capable hands.

"Supprise you some, does it, Louise?" Cap'n

Abe said. "Cap'n Am'zon taught me. Most old whalers knit. That, an' doin' scrimshaw work, was 'bout all that kep' 'em from losing their minds on them long v'y'ges into the Pacific. An' I've seen the time myself when I was hi-mighty glad I'd l'arned to count stitches.

"Land sakes! Some o' them whalin' v'y'ges lasted three-four years. Cap'n Am'zon was in the old bark *Neptune's Daughter* when she was caught in the ice and drifted pretty average close't to the south pole.

"You know," said Cap'n Abe reflectively, "the Antarctic regions ain't like the Arctic. 'Cause why? There ain't no folks there. Cap'n Am'zon says there ain't 'nough land at the south pole to make Marm Scudder's garden—and they say she didn't need more'n what her patchwork quilt would cover. Where there's land there's folks. And *if* there was land in the Antarctic there'd be Eskimos like there is up North.

"'Hem! Well, that wasn't what I begun on, was it? This knitting. Cap'n Am'zon says that many's the time he's thanked his stars he knowed how to knit."

"I shall be glad to meet him," said Louise.

"If he comes," Cap'n Abe rejoined, "an' I go away as I planned to, 'twon't make a mite o' difference to you, Niece Louise. You feel right at home here—and so'll Cap'n Am'zon, though he

ain't never been to Cardhaven yet. He'll be a lot better company for you than I'd be."

"Oh, Cap'n Abe, I can scarcely believe that!" cried the girl.

"You don't know Cap'n Am'zon," the storekeeper said. "I tell ye fair: he's ev'rything that I ain't! As a boy—'hem!—Am'zon was always leadin' an' me follerin'. I kinder took after my mother, I guess. She was *your* grandmother. Your grandfather was a Card—and a nice man he was.

"Our father—me an' Am'zon's—was Cap'n Joshua Silt of the schooner *Bravo*. Hi-mighty trim and taut craft she was, from all accounts. I—I warn't born when he died," added Cap'n Abe, hesitatingly.

"You were a posthumous child!" said Louise.

"Er—I guess so. Kinder 'pindlin', too. Yes! yes! Cap'n Am'zon's ahead o' me—in ev'ry way. When father died 'twas pretty average hard on mother," Cap'n Abe pursued. "We was livin' at Rocky Head. I guess I told you b'fore?"

"Yes," Louise said, interested.

"The *Bravo* was makin' reg'lar trips from Newport to Bangor, Maine. Short-coastin' v'y'ges paid well in them days. There come a big storm in the spring—onexpected. Mother'd got a letter from Cap'n Josh—father he'd put out o' Newport with a sartain tide. He warn't jest a fair-weather

skipper. Cap'n Am'zon gits his pluck an' darin' from Cap'n Josh.

"Well, mother knowed he must be out o' sight of Fort Adams and the Dumplin's when the storm burst, and that he'd take the inside passage, the wind bein' what it was. She watched from Rocky Head and she seen what she knowed to be the *Bravo* heave in sight.

"There warn't no foolin' her," pursued Cap'n Abe, whose pipe had gone out but whose knitting needles twinkled the faster. "No. She knowed the schooner far's she could glim her. She watched the *Bravo* caught in the cross-current when the gale dropped sudden, and tryin' to claw off shore.

"But no use! She was doomed! There warn't no help for the schooner. She went right on to Toll o' Death Reef and busted up in an hour. Not a body ever was beached, for the current, tide, *an'* gale was all off shore. And it happened in plain sight of our windows.

"Two months later," Cap'n Abe said reflectively, "I come into the world. Objectin', of course, like all babies. Funny thing that. We all come into it makin' all kinds of a hullabaloo against anchorin' here; and we most of us kick just as hard against slippin' our moorin's to get out of it.

"Land sakes!" he exclaimed in conclusion. "There ye be. I guess my mother hated the sea 'bout as much as any longshore woman ever did.

And there's a slew of 'em detest it worse'n cats. Why, ye couldn't hire some o' these Cape Cod females to get into a boat. Their men for generations was drowned and more'n forty per cent. of the stones in the churchyards along the coast, sacred to the mem'ry of the men of the fam'lies, have on 'em: *'Lost at sea.'*

"Can't blame the women. Old Ella Coffin that lives on Narrer P'int over yonder ain't been to the main but once't in fifteen years. That was when an off-shore gale blew all the water out o' the breach 'twixt the p'int and the mainland.

"Ye see," said Cap'n Abe, smiling again, "Narrer P'int is re'lly an island, even at low water. But *then* a hoss an' buggy can splatter across't the breach. But it makes Marm Coffin seasick even to ride through water in a buggy. Marked, she is, as you might say.

"Well, now, Louise, child," the storekeeper added, "I'm a-gassin' 'bout things that don't much int'rest you, I cal'late. I'll light a lamp an' show you up to your room. When Perry Baker comes by and by, I'll help him in with your trunks. You needn't worry about 'em."

It had been foggy on the Sound the night before and Louise had not slept until the boat had rounded Point Judith. So she was not averse to retiring at this comparatively early hour.

Cap'n Abe led her upstairs to a cool, clean, and

comfortable chamber. The old four-posted, corded bedstead stood in the middle of the room, covered with a blue-and-white coverlet, with sheets and pillow cases as white as foam. It could not be doubted that Cap'n Abe had carried out his idea of hospitality. The spare room was always ready for the possible guest.

"Good-night, uncle," she said, smiling at him as he handed her the lamp. "I believe I am going to have a delightful time here."

"Of course you be! Of course!" he exclaimed. "An' if I ain't here, Cap'n Am'zon will show you a better time than I could. Good-night. Sleep well, Louise."

He kissed her on the forehead. But she, impulsively, pressed her fresh lips to the storekeeper's weather-beaten cheek. Before she closed the door of the bedroom she heard him clumping downstairs in his heavy boots.

After that he must have removed his footgear for, although she heard doors open and close, she could not distinguish his steps.

"I'm glad I came!" she told herself with enthusiasm as she prepared to retire. "What a delightful old place it is! And Uncle Abram—why, he's a *dear!* Daddy-prof was not half enthusiastic enough about the Cape Cod folk. It has been a distinct loss to me that I was never here before."

She laid out her toilet requisites upon the painted

pine bureau and hung her negligée over the back of a chair. As she retied the ribbon in one of the sleeves of her nightgown she thought:

"And that Tapp boy came back a second time! Some fisherman's son, I suppose. But exceedingly nice looking!"

A little later the feather bed had taken her into its arms and she almost instantly fell asleep. Occasionally through the night she was roused by unfamiliar sounds. There was a fog coming in from the sea and the siren at the lighthouse on the Neck began to bellow like a bereft cow.

There were movements downstairs. Once she heard a wagon stop, and voices. Then the bumping of heavy boxes on the side porch. Her trunks. Voices below in the living-room—gruff, yet subdued. Creaking footsteps on the stair; then Louise realized that they were carrying something heavy down and out to the waiting wagon. She was just dropping to sleep when the wagon was driven away.

There came a heavy summons on her door while it was still dark. But a glance at her watch assured Lou Grayling that it was the fog that made the light so dim.

"Yes, Cap'n Abe?" she called cheerfully, for even early rising could not quench her good spirits.

"'Tain't time to get up yet, Niece Louise," he told her behind the thin panel of the door. "Don't

disturb yourself. Cap'n Am'zon's come an' I'm off."

"You're *what?*" gasped the girl sitting up in her nest of feathers.

"I'm a-goin' to Boston. Jest got time to ketch the clam-train at the depot. Don't you bother. Cap'n Am'zon's here and he'll take care of you till I get back. Betty Gallup'll be here by six or a little after to do the work. You can have her stop at night, if you want to."

"But, Uncle——"

"Must hurry, Louise," hastily said Cap'n Abe as he heard the bedcords creak and the patter of the girl's feet on the matting. "Cap'n Am'zon knows of a craft that'll sail to-day from Boston and I must jine her crew. Good-bye!"

He was gone. Louise, throwing on the negligée, hurried to the screened window. The fog had breathed upon the wires and clouded them. She heard the door open below, a step on the porch, and then a muffled:

"Bye, Am'zon. Don't take no wooden money. I'm off."

A shrouded figure passed up the road and was quickly hidden by the fog.

CHAPTER VI

BOARDED BY PIRATES

LOUISE could not go back to sleep. She drew the ruffles of the negligée about her throat and removed the sliding screen the better to see into the outer world.

There was a movement in the fog, for the rising breeze ruffled it. Full daybreak would bring its entire dissipation. Already the mist held a luster heralding the sun. The "hush-hush" of the surf along The Beaches was more insistent now than at any time since Louise had come to Cap'n Abe's store, while the moan of the breakers on the outer reefs was like the deep notes of a distant organ.

A cock crew, and at his signal outdoor life seemed to awaken. Other chanticleers sounded their alarms; a colt whistled in a paddock and his mother neighed softly from her stall; a cow lowed; then, sweet and clear as a mountain stream, broke forth the whistle of a wild bird in the marsh. This matin of the feathered songster rose higher and higher till he reached the very top note of his scale and then fell again, by cadences, until it mingled with the less compelling calls of other birds.

There was a warm pinkness spreading through the fog in one direction, and Louise knew it must be the reflection of the light upon the eastern horizon. The sun would soon begin a new day's journey.

The fog was fast thinning, for across the road she could see a spiral of blue smoke mounting through it from the chimney of a neighbor. The kitchen fire there had just been lighted.

Below, and from the living-rooms behind the store, the girl heard some faint noises as though the early morning tasks of getting in wood and filling the coal scuttle were under way. Uncle Amazon must be "takin' holt" just as Cap'n Abe said he would.

Louise was curious to see the returned mariner; but it was too early to go down yet. She might really have another nap before she dressed, she thought, yawning behind a pink palm.

There was a step in the store. Her room overlooked by two windows the roof of the front porch and she could hear what went on below plainly. The step was lighter than Cap'n Abe's. The bolts of the two-leaved door rattled and it was set wide; she heard the iron wedges kicked under each to hold it open. Then a smell of pipe smoke was wafted to her nostrils.

A footstep on the Shell Road announced the approach of somebody from The Beaches. Louise

yawned again and was on the point of creeping into bed once more when she descried the figure coming through the fog. She saw only the boots and legs of the person at first; but the fog was fast separating into wreaths which the rising breeze hurried away, and the girl at the window soon saw the full figure of the approaching man—and recognized him.

At almost the same moment Lawford Tapp raised his eyes and saw her; and his heart immediately beat the call to arms. Louise Grayling's morning face, framed by the sash and sill of her bedroom window, was quite the sweetest picture he had ever seen.

It was only for a moment he saw her, her bare and rounded forearm on the sill, the frilly negligée so loosened that he could see the column of her throat. Her gray eyes looked straight into his—then she was gone.

"Actress, or not," muttered the son of the Salt Water Taffy King, "there's nothing artificial about her. And she's Cap'n Abe's niece. Well!"

He saw the figure on the porch, smoking, and hailed it:

"Hey, Cap'n Abe! Those fishhooks you sold me last evening aren't what I wanted—and there's the *Merry Andrew* waiting out there for me now. I want——"

The figure in the armchair turned its head. It was not Cap'n Abe at all!

"Mornin', young feller," said the stranger cordially. "You'll have to explain a leetle about them hooks. I ain't had a chance to overhaul much of Abe's cargo yet. I don't even know where he stows his small tackle. Do you?"

Fully a minute did Lawford Tapp keep him waiting for an answer while he stared at the stranger. He was not a big man, but he somehow gave the impression of muscular power. He was dressed in shabby clothing—shirt, dungaree trousers, and canvas shoes such as sailors work and go aloft in. The pipe he smoked was Cap'n Abe's—Lawford recognized it.

There was not, however, another thing about this man to remind one of the old storekeeper. This stranger was burned to a rich mahogany hue. Not alone his shaven face, but his bared forearms and his chest where the shirt was left unbuttoned seemed stained by the tropical sun. Under jet-black brows the eyes that gazed upon Lawford Tapp seemed dark.

His sweeping mustache was black; and such hair as was visible showed none of the iron gray of advancing age in it. He wore gold rings in his ears and to cap his piratical-looking figure was a red bandana worn turbanwise upon his head.

"What's the matter with you, young feller? Cat got your tongue?" demanded the stranger.

"Well, of all things!" finally gasped Lawford. "I thought you were Cap'n Abe. But you're not. You must be Cap'n Amazon Silt."

"That's who I be," agreed the other.

"His brother!"

"Ain't much like Abe, eh?" and Cap'n Amazon smiled widely.

"Only your voice. That is a little like Cap'n Abe's. Well, I declare!" repeated Lawford, coming deliberately up the steps.

Cap'n Amazon rose briskly and led the way into the store. The fog was clearing with swiftness and a ray of sunlight slanted through a dusty window with sufficient strength to illumine the shelves behind the counter.

"Those boxes yonder are where Cap'n Abe keeps his fishhooks. But isn't he here?"

"He's off," Cap'n Amazon replied. "Up anchor'd and sailed 'bout soon's I come. Been ready to go quite a spell, I shouldn't wonder. Had his chest all packed and sent it to the depot by a wagon. Walked over himself airly to ketch the train. These the hooks, son?"

"But where's he *gone?*"

"On a v'y'ge," replied Cap'n Amazon. "Why shouldn't he? Seems he's been lashed here, tight and fast, for c'nsider'ble of a spell. He and this

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store of hisn was nigh 'bout spliced. I don't see how he *has* weathered it so long."

"Gone away!" murmured Lawford.

Cap'n Amazon eyed him with a tilt to his head and possibly a twinkle of amusement in his eye. "Young man, what's your name?" he asked bluntly. Lawford told him. "Wal, it strikes me," Cap'n Amazon said, "that your tops'ls air slattin' a good deal. You ain't on the wind."

"I *am* upset, I declare!"

"Sure you got the right hooks this time?"

"Yes. I believe so."

"Then if your *Merry Andrew*—what is she, cat-rigged or——"

"Sloop."

"Then if your *Merry Andrew* sloop's a-waiting for you, *that's* the way out," said Cap'n Amazon coolly, pointing with his pipestem to the door. "Come again—when you want to buy anything in Abe's stock. Good day!"

Lawford halted a moment at the door to look back at the bizarre figure behind the counter, leaning on the scarred brown plank just as Cap'n Abe so often did. The amazing difference between the storekeeper's well remembered appearance and that of his substitute grew more startling.

As Cap'n Amazon stood there half stooping, leaning on his hairy fists, the picture rose in Lawford Tapp's mind of a pirate, cutlass in teeth and

his sash full of pistols, swarming over the rail of a doomed ship. The young man had it in his mind to ask a question about that wonderfully pretty girl above. But, somehow, Cap'n Amazon did not appear to be the sort of person to whom one could put even a mildly impudent question.

The young man walked slowly down the road toward the shore where his boat was beached. He had no idea that a pair of gray eyes watched him from that window where he had glimpsed the vision of girlish beauty only a few minutes before.

The neighborhood was stirring now and Louise had not gone back to bed. Instead, she dressed as simply as she could until it would be possible to get at her trunks.

While thus engaged she observed the neighborhood as well as she could see it from the windows of her chamber. Down the Shell Road, in the direction of the sea, there were but two or three houses—small dwellings in wind-swept yards where beach grass was about all the verdure that would grow.

Across the road from the store, however, and as far as she could see toward Cardhaven, were better homes, some standing in the midst of tilled fields and orchards. Sandy lanes led to these homesteads from the highway. She could see the blunt spire of the Mariner's Chapel. Yet Cap'n Abe's

house and store stood quite alone, for none of the other dwellings were close to the road.

She set her chamber door ajar and suddenly heard the clash of voices. The one that seemed nearest to the stair was gruff, but feminine.

"That must be Betty Gallup," thought Louise. "It is nearly six. I'll go down and interview the lady who Cap'n Abe said ought to sail before the mast."

The foot of the stairway was in the back entry which itself opened upon the rear porch. As she came lightly down the stairs Louise saw a squat, square figure standing in the open doorway. It was topped by a man's felt hat and was dressed in a loose, shapeless coat and a scant skirt down to the tops of a pair of men's shoes.

Over the shoulder of this queer looking person —of whose sex it was hard to be sure—Louise could see an open letter that was evidently being perused not for the first time.

The hands that held the letter were red and hard and blunt-fingered, but not large. They did not look feminine, however; not in the least.

The light tap of the girl's heels as she stepped on the bare floor at the foot of the stairway aroused this person, who turned, revealing a rather grim, weather-beaten face, lit by little sharp brown eyes that proceeded to stare at Louise Grayling with frank curiosity.

"Humph!" ejaculated the woman.

Oh, it was a woman, Louise could now see, although Betty Gallup boasted a pronounced mustache and a voice both deep and hoarse, while she looked every inch the able seaman she was.

"Humph!" she exclaimed again. "You don't look much like a pirate, that's one comfort!"

Louise burst into gay laughter—she could not help it.

"I see by this letter Cap'n Abe left for me that you're his niece—his ha'f sister's child—name, Louise Grayling; and that you've come to stay a spell."

"Yes," the girl rejoined, still dimpling. "And I know you must be Mrs. Gallup!"

"Bet Gallup. Yep. Ain't much chance of mistaking *me,*" the woman said, still staring at Louise. "Humph! you're pretty 'nough not to need m'lasses to ketch flies. Why didn't Cap'n Abe stay to home when you come visiting him?"

"Why, he had his plans all laid to go away, if Uncle Amazon came."

"Ya-as. That's so. You are *his* niece, too, I s'pose."

"Whose niece? Uncle Amazon's? I suppose I am," Louise gayly replied, "though when I came I had no idea there was a second uncle down here on the Cape."

"What's that?" demanded Betty Gallup, her speech crackling like a rifle shot.

"I had not heard before of Cap'n Amazon," the girl explained. "You see, for several reasons, I have known very little about my mother's kinfolk. She died when I was a baby. We have traveled a good deal, father and I."

"I see. I been told you worked for them movin' pictures. Mandy Card was over to my house last night. Well! what do you think of your Uncle Am'zon?"

"I can express no opinion until I have met him," Louise returned, again dimpling.

"Haven't ye seen him?" gasped Betty in astonishment.

"Not yet."

"Ye didn't see him when he came last night?"

"I was in bed."

"Then how—how d'ye know Cap'n Abe's gone? Or that this man is Am'zon Silt? Nobody ever seen this critter 'round Cardhaven before," Betty Gallup declared with strong conviction.

"Oh, no; Uncle Amazon has never been here to visit Cap'n Abe before. Cap'n Abe told me all about it," the girl explained, fearing that scandal was to take root here and now if she did not discourage it. "Of course Uncle Abe went away. He came to my door and bade me good-bye."

Louise was puzzled. She saw an expression in Betty Gallup's face that she could not interpret.

"Ye heard Cap'n Abe *say* he was goin'," mut-

tered Betty. "*His* voice sounds mighty like Cap'n Abe's. But mebbe Abe Silt didn't go after all—not rightly."

"What *do* you mean, Mrs. Gallup?" demanded Louise in bewilderment.

"Well, if you ask *me,* I should say we'd been boarded by pirates. Go take a look at that Uncle Am'zon of yourn. He's in the store."

CHAPTER VII

UNDER FIRE

"UNCLE AMAZON?" burst out Louise. "A pirate?"

"That's what he looks like," repeated Betty Gallup, nodding her head on which the man's hat still perched. "I never saw the beat! Why, that man give me the shock of my life when I came in here just now!"

"What *do* you mean?" the amazed girl asked.

"Why, as I come in—I was a lettle early, knowin' you was here—I heard as I s'posed Cap'n Abe in the sittin'-room. I saw this letter, sealed and directed to me, on the dresser there. "'Humph!' says I. 'Who's writin' billy-doos to *me,* I'd admire to know?' And I up and opened it and see it's in Cap'n Abe's hand. Just then I heard him behind me——"

"Heard *who?* Not Cap'n Abe?"

"No, no! This other feller—this Cap'n Am'zon Silt, as he calls himself. But I *thought* 'twas Cap'n Abe's step I heard. He says: 'Oh! you've found the letter?' I declare I thought 'twas your uncle's voice!"

"But it *was* my uncle's voice, of course," Louise reminded her, much amused. "Cap'n Amazon Silt is my uncle, too."

"Humph! I s'pose so. Looks to be. If *'tis* him. Anyhow," pursued the jerkily speaking Betty Gallup, "I turned 'round when he spoke spectin' to see Cap'n Abe—for I hadn't read this letter then —*and there he warn't!* Instead—of all the lookin' critters! There! you go take a peek at him and see what you think yourself. I'll put the breakfast on the table. He's made coffee and the mush is in the double-biler and the biscuits in the oven are just browning. I reckon he's as handy 'round the kitchen as Cap'n Abe is. Lots of these old sailors be."

"Fancy! an uncle who is a pirate!" giggled Louise and she ran through the living-room and the dividing hall to the door of the store. First she saw Cap'n Amazon from the rear. The red bandana swathing his head, below which was a lank fringe of black hair, was the only bizarre thing she noticed about her new-found relative. He seemed to have very quick hearing for almost instantly he swung smartly around to face her.

"Oh!" was expelled from the girl's lips, for she was as startled as Lawford Tapp and Betty Gallup had been.

Compared with the mild-appearing, heavily whiskered Cap'n Abe, this brother of the store-

keeper was in looks what Betty had pronounced him. His dark complexion, the long mustache, as black and glossy as a crow's wing, the gold rings in his ears, with the red handkerchief to top it all, made Cap'n Amazon Silt as romantic a figure as ever peered out of a Blackbeard or a Henry Morgan legend.

There were intricate traceries on his forearms in red and blue ink; beneath the open collar of his shirt the girl gained a glimpse of other tattooing. There was a faint scar traced along his right jaw, almost from ear to chin, which added a certain grimness to his expression.

Yet his was not at all a sinister face. His eyes twinkled at her kindly—almost like Cap'n Abe's eyes—and the huge mustache lifted in a smile.

"Ahoy!" he cried jovially. "So this is my niece, Louise, is it? Well, to be sure! Abe didn't overpraise you. You *be* a pretty tidy craft."

The girl dimpled, coming forward to give him her hand. As on the day before, her hand was lost in a warm, firm clasp, while her uncle continued to look her over with approval.

"Yes, sir!" he ejaculated. "You look to me like one o' the tidiest craft I ever clapped eyes on. I don't scarcely see how Abe could go away and leave you. Dunno's he's got an eye for a pretty woman like me. Bless you! I been a slave to the women all my life."

"Yet never married, Uncle Amazon?" she cried roguishly.

"Tell you how 'twas," he whispered hoarsely, his hand beside his mouth. "I never could decide betwixt and between 'em. No, sir! They are all so desir'ble that I couldn't make up my mind. So I stayed single."

"Perhaps you showed wisdom, Uncle Amazon," laughed the girl. "Still—when you grow old——"

"Oh! there's plenty of sailors' snug harbors," he hastened to say. "And time enough to worry about that when I *be* old."

"I thought—— Why! you look younger than Cap'n Abe," she said.

"Ain't it a fact? He's let himself run to seed and get old lookin'. That's from stayin' ashore all his life. It's the feel of a heavin' deck under his feet that keeps the spring in a man's wishbone. Yes, sir! Abe's all right—good man and all that—but he's no sailor," Cap'n Amazon added, shaking his head.

"Now, here!" he went on briskly, "we ought to have breakfast, hadn't we? I left that woman Abe has pokin' around here, to dish up; and it's 'most six bells. Feel kind of peckish myself, Louise."

"I'll run to see if the biscuits are done," said the girl; and she hurried to the kitchen ahead of him. Betty Gallup was waiting for her.

"What d'ye think of him?" she whispered anxiously.

"Why, he's splendid!" the girl replied scarcely stifling her laughter. "He's a *character!*"

"Humph! Mebbe. But even if he is your uncle, I got to say right now he ain't a man I'd trust. Nothin' a-tall like Cap'n Abe!"

"I think he seems a great deal like Uncle Abram."

"Humph! How long you knowed Abram Silt? Come here yesterday for the fust time. Lemme tell you, Miss Grayling, we've knowed Cap'n Abe around here for twenty year and more. Course, he ain't Cardhaven born; but we *know* him. He's as diff'rent from this pirate that calls himself Cap'n Am'zon Silt as chalk is from cheese."

The mush was on the table. Louise called Cap'n Amazon from the store. They sat down to the table just as she had sat opposite to Cap'n Abe the evening before. She thought, for a moment, that Cap'n Amazon was going to ask a blessing as her other uncle had. But no, he began spooning the mush into a rather capacious mouth.

Into the room from the rear strolled Diddimus, the tortoise-shell cat. Louise tried to attract his attention; but she was comparatively a stranger to him. The cat went around to the chair where Cap'n Abe always sat. He leaped into Cap'n Amazon's lap.

"Well, I never!" said Cap'n Amazon. "Seems quite to home, doesn't he?"

Diddimus, preparing to "make his bed," looked up with topaz eyes into the face of the captain. Louise could see the cat actually stiffen with surprise. Then, with a "p-sst-maow!" he leaped down and ran out of the room at high speed.

"What—what do you think of that?" gasped Cap'n Amazon. "The cat's gone crazy!"

The girl was in a gale of laughter. "Of course he hasn't," she said. "He thought you were Cap'n Abe—till he looked into your face. You can't blame the cat, Uncle Amazon."

Cap'n Amazon smote his knee a resounding smack of appreciation. "You got your bearin's correct, Louise, I do believe. I must have surprised the critter. And Abe set store by him, I've no doubt."

"Diddimus will get over it," said the amused Louise.

"There's that bird," Cap'n Amazon said suddenly, looking around at the cage hanging in the sunlit window. "What's Abe call him?"

"Jerry."

"And he told me to be hi-mighty tender with that canary. Wouldn't trust nobody else, he said, to feed and water him." He rose from the table, leaving his breakfast. "I wonder what Jerry thinks of me?"

He whistled to the bird and thrust a big forefinger between the wires of the cage. Immediately, with an answering chirp, the canary hopped along his perch with a queer sidewise motion and, reaching the finger, sprang upon it with a little flutter of its wings.

"There!" cried Cap'n Amazon, with boyish relief. "*He* takes to me all right."

"That don't show nothin'," said Betty Gallup from the doorway. She had removed her hat and coat and was revealed now as a woman approaching seventy, her iron-gray hair twisted into a "bob" so that it could be completely hidden when she had the hat on her head. "That don't show nothin'," she repeated grimly.

Cap'n Amazon jerked his head around to look at her, demanding: "Why don't it, I want to know?"

"'Cause the bird's pretty near stone-blind."

"Blind!" gasped Louise, pity in her tone.

"It can't be," murmured the captain, hastily facing the window again.

"I found *that* out a year an' more ago," Betty announced. "Didn't want to tell Cap'n Abe—he was that foolish about the old bird. Jerry's used to Cap'n Abe chirping to him and putting his finger 'twixt the slats of the cage for him to perch on. He just thinks you're Cap'n Abe."

She clumped out into the kitchen again in her

heavy shoes. Cap'n Amazon came slowly back to his chair. "Blind!" he repeated. "I want to know! Both his deadlights out. Too bad! Too bad!"

He did not seem to care for any more breakfast.

Footsteps in the store soon brought the substitute shopkeeper to his feet again.

"I s'pose that's somebody come aboard for a yard o' tape, or the seizings of a pair of shoes," he growled. "I'd ought to hauled in the gangplank when we set down."

He disappeared into the store and almost at once a shrill feminine voice greeted him as "Cap'n Abe." Vastly amused, Louise arose and softly followed to the store.

"Give me coupla dozen clothespins and a big darnin' needle, Cap'n Abe. I got my wash ready to hang out and found them pesky young 'uns of Myra Stout's had got holt o' my pin bag and fouled the pins all up usin' 'em for markers in their garden. I want—land sakes! Who—what —— *Where's* Cap'n Abe?"

"He ain't here just now," Cap'n Amazon replied. "I'm his brother. You'll have to pick out the needle you want. I can find and count the clothespins, I guess. Two dozen, you say?"

"Land sakes! Cap'n Abe gone away? Don't seem possible."

"There's a hull lot of seemin' impossible things in this world that come to pass just the same," the substitute storekeeper made answer, with some tartness. "Here's the needle drawer. Find what you want, ma'am."

Louise was frankly spying. She saw that the customer was a lanky young woman in a sunbonnet. When she dropped the bonnet back upon her narrow shoulders with an impatient jerk, the better to see the needles, it was revealed that her thin, light hair was drawn so tightly back from her face that it actually seemed to make her pop-eyed.

She had a rather pretty pink and white complexion, and aside from the defect of hairdressing might have been attractive. She possessed a thin and aquiline nose, however, the nostrils fairly quivering with eagerness and curiosity.

"Land sakes!" she was saying. "I know Cap'n Abe's been talkin' of goin' away—the longest spell! But so suddent—'twixt night and mornin' as ye might say——"

"Exactly," said Cap'n Amazon dryly, and went on counting the pins from the box into a paper sack.

"What 'bout the girl that's come here? That movie actress?" asked the young woman with added sharpness in her tone. "What you going to do with *her?*"

Cap'n Amazon came back to the counter and even

his momentary silence was impressive. He favored the customer with a long stare.

"Course, 'tain't none o' my business. I was just askin'——"

"You made an int'restin' discovery, then, ma'am," he said. "It *ain't* any of your business. Me and my niece'll get along pretty average well, I shouldn't wonder. Anything else, ma'am? I see the needle's two cents and the pins two cents a dozen. Six cents in all."

"Well, I run a book with Cap'n Abe. I ain't got no money with me," said the young woman defiantly.

"Le's see: what did you say your name was?" and Cap'n Amazon drew from the cash drawer a long and evidently fully annotated list of customers' names, prepared by Cap'n Abe.

"I'm Mandy Baker—she 'twas Mandy Card."

"Yes. I find you here all right. Your bill o' ladin' seems good. Good-mornin', ma'am. Call again."

Mandy Baker looked as though she desired to continue the conversation. But there was that in Cap'n Amazon's businesslike manner and speech that impressed Mrs. Baker—as it had Lawford Tapp—that here was a very different person from the easy-going, benign Cap'n Abe. Mandy sniffed, jerked her sunbonnet forward, and departed with her purchases.

Cap'n Amazon's quick eye caught sight of Louise's amused face in the doorway.

"Kind of a sharp craft that," he observed, watching Mandy cross the road. "Reminds me some o' one o' them Block Island double-enders they built purpose for sword-fishing. When you strike on to a sword-fish you are likely to want to back water 'bout as often as shove ahead. I cal'late this here Mandy Baker is some spry in her maneuvers. And I bet she's got one o' the laziest husbands in this whole town. 'Most always happens that way," concluded the captain, who seemed quite as homely philosophical and observant as his brother.

As a stone thrown into a quiet pool drives circling ripples farther and farther away from the point of contact, so the news of Cap'n Abe's secret departure and the appearance of the strange brother in his place, spread through the neighborhood.

The coming of Louise to the store on the Shell Road had also set the tongues to clacking. Mandy Baker, who took her husband's rating in women's eyes at his own valuation, was up in arms. A pretty girl, and an actress at that!—for until recent years that was a word to be only whispered in polite society on the Cape—was considered by such as Mandy to be under suspicion right from the start.

The mystery of Cap'n Amazon, however, quite

overtopped the gossip about Louise. Idlers who seldom dropped into the store before afternoon came on this day much earlier to have a look at Cap'n Amazon Silt. Women left their housework at "slack ends" to run over to the store for something considered suddenly essential to their work. Some of the clam-diggers lost a tide to obtain an early glimpse of Cap'n Amazon. Even the children came and peered in at the store door to see that strange, red-kerchief-topped figure behind Cap'n Abe's counter.

Cap'n Joab Beecher was one of the earliest arrivals. Cap'n Joab had been as close to Cap'n Abe as anybody in Cardhaven. There had been some little friction between him and the storekeeper on the previous evening. Cap'n Joab felt almost as though Cap'n Abe's sudden departure was a thrust at him.

But when he introduced himself to Cap'n Amazon the latter seized the caller's hand in a seaman's grip, and said heartily: "I want to know Cap'n Joab Beecher, of the old *Sally Noble.* I knowed the bark well, though I never happened to clap eyes on *you,* sir. Abe give me a letter for you. Here 'tis. Said you was a good feller and might help wise me to things in the store here till I'd l'arned her riggin' and how to sail her proper."

Cap'n Joab was frankly pleased by this. He spelled out the note Cap'n Abe had addressed to

him slowly, being without his reading glasses, and then said:

"I'm yours to command, Cap'n Silt. Land sakes! I s'pose your brother had a puffict right to go away. He'd talked about goin' enough. Where's he gone?"

"On a v'y'ge," said Cap'n Amazon.

"No! Gone to sea?"

"Yes. Sailing to-day—out o' Boston."

"I want to know! Abe Silt gone to sea! Wouldn't never believed it. Always 'peared to be afraid of gettin' his paws wet—same's a cat," ruminated Cap'n Joab. "What craft's he sailin' in?"

The Boston morning paper lay before Cap'n Amazon, opened at the page containing the shipping news. His glance dropped to the sailing notices and with scarcely a moment's hesitancy he said:

"*Curlew,* Ripley, master, out o' Boston. I knowed of her—knowed Cap'n Ripley," and he pointed to the very first line of the sailing list. "If Abe got there in time he like enough j'ined her crew."

"Shipped before the mast?" exploded Cap'n Joab.

"Well," Cap'n Amazon returned sensibly, "if you were skipper about where would you expect a lubber like Abe Silt to fit into your crew?"

"I swanny, that's so!" agreed Cap'n Joab.

"But it's goin' to be hard lines for a man of his years—and no experience."

Cap'n Amazon sniffed. "I guess he'll get along," he said, seemingly less disturbed by his brother's plight than other people. "Three months of summer sailin' won't do him no harm."

That he was under fire he evidently felt, and resented it. His brother's old neighbors and friends desired to know altogether too much about his business and that of Cap'n Abe. He told Louise before night:

"I tell you what, Abe's got the best of it! If I'd knowed I was goin' to be picked to pieces by a lot of busybodies the way I be, I'd never agreed to stay by the ship till Abe got back. No, sir! These folks around here are the beatenest I ever see."

Yet Louise noticed that he seemed able to hold his own with the curious ones. His tongue was quite as nimble as Cap'n Abe's had been. On the day of her arrival, Lou Grayling had believed she would be amused at Cardhaven. Ere the second twenty-four hours of her stay were rounded out, she knew she would be.

CHAPTER VIII

SOMETHING ABOUT SALT WATER TAFFY

DURING the day Cap'n Amazon and Amiel Perdue carried Louise's trunks upstairs and into the storeroom, handy to her own chamber. It seems Cap'n Amazon had not brought his own sea chest; only a "dunnage bag," as he called it.

"But there's plenty of Abe's duds about," he said; "and we're about of a size."

When Louise went to unpack her trunks she found a number of things in the storeroom more interesting even than her own pretty summer frocks. There were shells, corals, sea-ivory—curios, such as are collected by seamen the world over. Cap'n Abe was an indefatigable gatherer of such wares. There was a green sea chest standing with its lid wide open, tarred rope handles on its ends, that may have been around the world a score of times. It was half filled with old books.

All the dusty, musty volumes in the chest seemed to deal with the sea and sea-going. Many of them, long since out of print and forgotten, recounted strange and almost unbelievable romances of nautical life—stories of wrecks, fires, battles with

savages and pirates, discoveries of lone islands and marvelous explorations in lands which, since the date of publication, have become semi-civilized or altogether so.

Here were narratives of men who had sailed around the world in tiny craft like Captain Slocum; stories of seamen who had become chiefs of cannibal tribes, like the famous Larry O'Brien; several supposedly veracious narratives of the survivors of the *Bounty;* stories of Arctic and Antarctic discovery and privation. There were also several scrapbooks filled with newspaper clippings of nautical wonders—many of these clipped from New Bedford and Newport papers which at one time were particularly rich in whalers' yarns.

Interested in skimming these wonderful stories, Lou Grayling spent most of the afternoon. Here was a fund of entertainment for rainy days—or wakeful nights, if she chanced to suffer such. She carried one of the scrapbooks into her bedroom that it might be under her hand if she desired such amusement.

In arranging her possessions in closet and bureau, she found no time on this first day at Cap'n Abe's store to stroll even as far as The Beaches; but the next morning she got up betimes, as soon as Cap'n Amazon himself was astir, dressed, and ran down and out of the open back door while her uncle was sweeping the store.

The sun was but then opening a red eye above the horizon. The ocean, away out to this line demarcating sea and sky, was perfectly flat. Unlike the previous dawn, this was as clear as a bell's note.

Louise had been wise enough to wear high shoes, so the sands above high-water mark did not bother her. The waves lapped in softly, spreading over the dimpling gray beach, their voice reduced to a whispering murmur.

Along the crescent of the sands, above on the bluffs, were set the homes of the summer residents —those whom Gusty Durgin, the waitress at the hotel, termed "the big bugs." On the farthest point visible in this direction was a sprawling, ornate villa with private dock and boathouses, and a small breakwater behind which floated a fleet of small craft. Louise heard the "put-put-a-put" of a motor and descried a swift craft coming from this anchorage.

She saw, by sweeping it with her glance, that not a soul but herself was on the shore—neither in the direction of the summer colony nor on the other hand where the beach curved sharply out to the lighthouse at the end of the Neck. The motor boat was fast approaching the spot where Louise stood.

It being the single moving object on the scene, save the gulls, she began to watch it. There was

but one person in the motor boat. He was hatless and was dressed in soiled flannels. It was the young man, Lawford Tapp, of whom Cap'n Abe did not altogether approve.

"He must work for those people over there," Louise Grayling thought. "He *is* nice looking."

It could not be possible that Lawford Tapp had descried and recognized the figure of the girl from the Tapp anchorage!

He no longer wore his hip boots. After shutting off his engine, he guided the sharp prow of the launch right up into the sand and leaped into shallow water, bringing ashore the bight of the painter to throw over a stub sunk above high-water mark.

"Good-morning! What do you think of it?" he asked Louise, with a cordial smile that belonged to him.

"It is lovely!" she said. "Really wonderful! I suppose you have lived here so long it does not appeal to you as strongly as to the new-beholder?"

"I don't know about that. It's the finest place in the world, I think. There's no prettier shore along the Atlantic coast than The Beaches."

"Perhaps you are right. I do not know much about the New England coast," she confessed. "And that—where the spray dashes up so high, even on this calm morning?"

"Gull Rocks. The danger spot of all danger spots along the outer line of the Cape. In rough

weather all one can see out there is a cauldron of foam."

Before she could express herself again the purr of a swiftly moving motor car attracted her attention, and she turned to see a low, gray roadster coming toward them from the north. The Shell Road, before reaching the shore, swerved northward and ran along the bluffs on which the bungalows and summer cottages were built. These dwellings faced the smooth white road, the sea being behind them.

As Louise looked the car slowed down and stopped, the engine still throbbing. A girl was at the wheel. She was perhaps fifteen, without a hat and with two plaits of yellow hair lying over her slim shoulders.

"Hey, Ford!" she shouted to the young man, "haven't you been up to Cap'n Abe's yet? Daddy's down at the dock now and he's in a tearing hurry."

She gazed upon Lou Grayling frankly but made no sign of greeting. She did not wait, indeed, for a reply from the young man but threw in the clutch and the car shot away.

"I've got to go up to the store," he said. "L'Enfant Terrible is evidently going to Paulmouth to meet the early train. Must be somebody coming."

Louise looked at him quickly, her expression one

of perplexity. She supposed this child in the car was the daughter of Lawford's employer. But whoever before heard a fisherman speak just as he did? Had Cap'n Abe been at home she certainly would have tapped that fount of local knowledge for information regarding Lawford. He did not look so much the fisherman type without his jersey and high boots.

"How do you like the old fellow up at the store?" Lawford asked, as they strolled along together. "Isn't he a curious old bird?"

"You mean my Uncle Amazon?"

"Goodness! He *is* your uncle, too, isn't he?" and a flush of embarrassment came into his bronzed cheek. "I had forgotten he was Cap'n Abe's brother. He is so different!"

"Isn't he?" responded Louise demurely. "He doesn't look anything like Uncle Abram, at least."

"I should say not!" ejaculated Lawford. "Do you know, he's an awfully—er—romantic looking old fellow. Looks just as though he had stepped out of an old print."

"The frontispiece of a book about buccaneers, for instance?" she suggested gleefully.

"Well," and he smiled down upon her from his superior height, "I wasn't sure you would see it that way."

"Do you know," she told him, still laughing, "that Betty Gallup calls him nothing but 'that old

pirate.' She has taken a decided dislike to him and I have to keep smoothing her ruffled feathers. And, really, Cap'n Amazon is the *nicest* man."

"I bet he's seen some rough times," Lawford rejoined with vigor. "We used to think Cap'n Abe told some stretchers about his brother; but Cap'n Amazon looks as though he had been through all that Cap'n Abe ever told about—and more."

"Oh, he's not so very terrible, I assure you," Louise said, much amused.

"Did you notice the scar along his jaw? Looks like a cutlass stroke to me. I'd like to know how he came by it. It must have been some fight!"

"You will make him out a much more terrible character than he can possibly be."

"Never mind. If he's anything at all like Cap'n Abe, we'll get it all out of him. I bet he can tell us some hair-raisers."

"I tell you he's a nice old man, and I won't have you talk so about him," Louise declared. "We must change the subject."

"We'll talk about *you*," said Lawford quickly. "I'm awfully curious. When does your—er—work begin down here?"

"My work?" Then she understood him and dimpled. "Oh, just now is my playtime."

"Making pictures must be interesting."

"I presume it looks so to the outsider," she ad-

mitted. It amused her immensely that he should think her a motion picture actress.

"Your coming here and Cap'n Amazon exchanging jobs with his brother have caused more excitement than Cardhaven and the vicinity have seen in a decade. Or at least since *I* have lived here."

"Oh! Then are you not native to the soil?"

"No. Not exactly," he replied. And then after a moment he added: "It's a great old place, even in winter."

"Not dull at all?"

"Never dull," he reassured her. "Too much going on, on sea and shore, to ever be dull. Not for me, at least. I love it."

They reached the store. Louise bade the young man good-morning and went around to the back door to greet Betty.

Lawford made his purchases in rather serious mood and returned to his motor boat. His mind was fixed upon the way Louise Grayling had looked as he stepped ashore and greeted her.

He had been close enough to her now, and for time enough as well, to be sure that there was nothing artificial about this girl. She was as natural as a flower—and just as sweet! There was a softness to her cheek and to the curve of her neck like rich velvet. Her eyes were mild yet sparkling when she became at all animated. And that demure smile! And her dimples!

When a young man gets to making an accounting of a girl's charms in this way, he is far gone indeed. Lawford Tapp was very seriously smitten.

He saw his youngest sister, Cicely, whom the family always called L'Enfant Terrible, speeding back to the villa in the automobile. She had not gone as far as Paulmouth, after all, and she reached home long before he docked the launch. Lawford did not pay much attention to what went on in the big villa. His mother and sisters lived a social life of their own. He merely slept there, spending most of his days on the water.

The Salt Water Taffy King was not at the private dock when Lawford arrived. Mr. Israel Tapp was an irritable and impatient man. He "flew off the handle" at the slightest provocation. Many times a day he lost his temper and, as Lawford phlegmatically expressed it, "blew up."

These exhibitions meant nothing particularly to Mr. Tapp. They were escape-valves for a nervous irritability that had grown during his years of idleness. Born of a poor Cape family, but with a dislike for fish-seines and lobster-pots, he had turned his attention from the first to the summer visitors, even in his youth beginning to flock to the old-fashioned ports of the Cape. Catering to their wants was a gold mine but little worked at that time.

He began to sell candy at one of the more popular resorts. Then he began to make candy. His Salt Water Taffy became locally famous. He learned that a good many of the wealthier people who visited the Cape in summer played all the year around. They went to Atlantic City or to the Florida beaches in the winter.

So Israel Tapp branched out and established salt water taffy kitchens all up and down the coast. "I. Tapp, the Salt Water Taffy King" became a catch-word. It was then but a step to incorporating a company and establishing huge candy factories. I. Tapp went on by leaps and bounds. While yet a comparatively young man he found himself a multi-millionaire. Even a rather expensive family could not spend his income fast enough.

He built the ornate villa at The Beaches and, like Lawford, preferred to live there rather than elsewhere. His wife and the older girls insisted upon having a town house in Boston and in traveling at certain times to more or less exclusive resorts and to Europe. Their one ambition was to get into that exclusive social set in which they felt their money should rightfully place them. But a house on the Back Bay does not always assure one's entrance to the circles of the "gilded codfish."

Mr. Tapp went down to the dock again after a time. Lawford had the *Merry Andrew* all ready to set out on the proposed fishing trip. The sloop

was a pretty craft, clinker built, and about the fastest sailing boat within miles of Cardhaven. Lawford was proud of her.

"So you're back at last, are you?" snapped the Salt Water Taffy King.

He was a portly little man with a red face and a bald brow. His very strut pronounced him a self-made man. He glared at his son, whose cool nonchalance he often declared was impudence.

"I've been waiting some time for you, dad. Hop aboard," Lawford calmly said.

"You took your time in getting back here," responded his father, by no means mollified. "And you knew I was waiting. But you had to stand and talk to a girl over there. Cicely says it is that picture actress who is staying at Cap'n Abe's. Is that so?"

"I presume Cicely is right," his son answered. "There is no other here at present to my knowledge."

"Of all things!" ejaculated Mr. Tapp. "You are always making some kind of a fool of yourself, Lawford. Don't, for pity's sake, be *that* kind of a fool."

"What do you mean, dad?" and now the young man's eyes flashed. It was seldom that Lawford turned upon his father in anger.

"You know very well what I mean. Keep away from such women. Don't get messed up with actor

people. I won't have it, I tell you! I am determined that at least *one* rich man's son shall not be the victim of the wiles of any of these stage women."

The flush remained in Lawford's cheek. It hurt him to hear his father speak so in referring to Louise Grayling. He, too, possessed some of the insular prejudice of his kind against those who win their livelihood in the glare of the theatrical spotlight. This gentle, well-bred, delightful girl staying at Cap'n Abe's store was a revelation to him. He held his tongue, however, and held his temper in check as well.

"I don't see," stormed I. Tapp, "why you can't take up with a nice girl and marry. Why, at your age I was married and we had Marian!"

"Don't you think that should discourage me, dad?" Lawford put in. "Marian is nobody to brag of, I should say."

"Hah!" ejaculated his father. "She's a fool, too. But there are nice girls. I was talking to your mother about your case last night. Of course, I don't want you to say anything to her about what I'm going to tell you now. She's got the silliest notions," pursued Mr. Tapp who labored under the belief that all the wisdom of the ages had lodged under his own hat. "Expects her daughters to marry dukes and you to catch a princess or the like."

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"There are no such fish in these waters," laughed Lawford. "At least, none has so much as nibbled at *my* hook."

"And no nice girl will nibble at it if you don't come ashore once in a while and get into something besides fisherman's duds."

"Now, dad, clothes do not make the man."

"Who told you such a fool thing as that? Some fool philosopher with only one shirt to his back said it. Bill Johnson proved how wrong that was to my satisfaction years and years ago. Good old Bill! I wanted to branch out. We had just that one little candy factory and I worked in it myself every day.

"I got the idea," continued I. Tapp, launched on a favorite subject now, "that my balance sheet and outlook for trade might impress the bank people. I wanted to build a bigger factory. So I took off my apron one day and walked over to the bank. I saw the president. He looked like a fashion plate himself and he swung a pair of dinky glasses on a cord as he listened to me and looked me over. Then he turned me down—flat!

"I told Bill about it. Bill was kind of tied up just then himself. That was before he made his big strike. But he was a different fellow from me. Bill always looked like ready money.

"'Isra,' he says to me, 'I'll tell you how to get that money from the bank.'

"'It can't be done, Bill,' I told him. 'The president of the bank showed me that my business was too weak to stand such spread-eagling.'

"'Nonsense!' says Bill. 'It isn't your business, it's your nerve that you've got to hire money on—and your clothes. You do what I tell you. Come to my tailor's in the morning.'

"Well, to cut a long story short, I did it. I rigged up to beat that bank president himself. When he saw me in about two hundred dollars' worth of good clothes he considered the case again and recommended the loan to his board. 'You put your facts much more lucidly to-day, Mr. Tapp,' is the way he expressed himself. But take it from me, Lawford, it was my clothes that made the impression.

"So!" ruminated Mr. Tapp, "that is one thing Bill Johnson did for me. And later, as you know, he came into the candy business with me and his money helped make I. Tapp, the Salt Water Taffy King. Lawford, Bill is like a brother to me. His girl, Dorothy, is one of the nicest girls who ever stepped in a slipper."

"Dorothy Johnson is a really sweet girl, dad," Lawford agreed. "I like her."

"There!" ejaculated I. Tapp. "You let that liking become something stronger. Dorothy's just the girl for you to marry."

"*What?*" gasped the skipper of the *Merry*

Andrew, almost losing his grip on the steering wheel.

"You get my meaning," said his father, scowling. "I've always meant you should marry Bill's daughter. I had your mother write her last night inviting her down here. Of course, your mother and the girls think Bill Johnson's folks are too plain. But I'm boss once in a while in my own house."

"And you call mother a matchmaker!"

"I know what I want and I'm going to get it," said I. Tapp doggedly. "Dorothy is the girl for you. Don't you get entangled with anybody else. Not a penny of my money will you ever handle if you don't do as I say, young man!"

"You needn't holler till you're hit, dad," Lawford said, trying to speak carelessly.

"Oh! *I* sha'n't holler," snarled the Taffy King. "I warn you. One such play as that and I'm through with you. I'm willing to support an idle, ne'er-do-well; but he sha'n't saddle himself with one of those theatrical creatures and bring scandal upon the family. Do you know what I was doing when I was your age? I had a booth at 'Gansett, two at Newport, a big one at Atlantic City, and was beginning to branch out. I worked like a dog, too."

"That's why I think I don't have to work, dad," said Lawford coolly.

CHAPTER IX.

SUSPICION HOVERS.

BETTY GALLUP, clothed as usual in her man's hat and worn pea-coat, but likewise on this occasion with mystery, seized Louise by the hand the instant she appeared and drew her into the kitchen, shutting the door between that and the living-room.

"What is the matter?" the girl asked. "Have you broken something—or is the canary dead?"

"Sh!" warned Betty, her little brown eyes blinking rapidly. "I heard something last night."

"I didn't. I slept like a baby. The night before I heard that old foghorn——"

"I mean," interrupted Betty, "something was told me."

"Well, go on." Louise made up her mind that she could not stem the tide of talk.

"About your uncle, Cap'n Abe. He—he never was seen to take that train to Boston. I got it straight, or pretty average straight. Mandy Baker told me, and Peke Card's wife, Mary Lizbeth, told her, who got it right from Lute Craven who works in the post-office uptown, and Lute got it from

Noah Coffin. You know, he't drives the ark you come over in from Paulmouth. Well! Noah was at Paulmouth depot as he always is of course when the clam train stops at five-thutty-five. He says he didn't see Cap'n Abe nor nobody that looked like him board that train yest'day mornin'."

"Why, Betty!" Louise could only gasp. This house-that-Jack-built narrative quite took her breath away.

"Besides," went on Betty, "there's more to it. Cap'n Abe's chest was took back to the depot by Perry Baker when he brought your trunks over, sure 'nough. And Perry Baker says he shipped that chest to Boston for your uncle, marked to be called for. It went by express."

"But—but what of it?" asked the puzzled girl.

"Humph! Stands to reason," declared Mrs. Gallup, "that Cap'n Abe wouldn't have done no such foolish thing as that. It costs money to ship a heavy sea chest by express. He could have took it on his ticket as baggage, free gratis, for nothin'!"

"I really don't see," Louise now said rather severely, "that these facts you state—if they are facts—are any of our business, Betty. Uncle Abram might have taken the train at some other station. He was not sure, perhaps, whether he would join the ship Cap'n Amazon recommended, so why should he not send his chest by express?"

"Cap'n Am'zon! Humph!" sniffed Betty. "Nobody knows whether that's his name or not. *He* comes here without a smitch of clo'es, as near as I can find out."

Louise was amused; yet she was somewhat vexed as well. The curiosity, as well as the animosity, displayed by Betty and others of the neighbors began to appall her. If Cape Cod folk were, as her daddy-professor had declared, "the salt of the earth," some of the salt seemed to have lost its savor.

"We were talking about Cap'n Abe," said Louise severely. "Just as he had his own good reasons for going away when and how he did, he probably had his reasons for taking nobody into his confidence. This Perry Baker, the expressman, must know that Cap'n Abe sent the trunk from the house, here."

"Humph! Yes! Nobody's denyin' that."

"Then Cap'n Abe must have known exactly what he wished to do. Cap'n Amazon surely had nothing to do with the chest, with how his brother took the train, or with *where* he took it. Really, Betty, what do you suspect Cap'n Amazon has done?"

"I don't know what he's done," snapped Betty. "But I wouldn't put nothin' past him, from his looks. The old pirate!"

"You will make me feel very bad if you continue to talk this way about my Uncle Amazon," said the girl, far from feeling amused now. "It is

not right. I hope you will not continue to repeat such things. If you do you will some time be sorry for it, Betty."

"Humph!" sniffed the woman. "Mebbe I will. But I'm warnin' you, Miss Grayling."

"Warning me of what?"

"Of that man. That old sinner! I never see a wickeder looking feller in my life—and I've sailed with my father and my husband to 'most ev'ry quarter of the globe. He may be twin brother to the Angel Gabriel; but if he is, his looks belie it!"

There was nothing in all this of enough consequence to disturb the girl, only in so far as she was vexed to find the neighbors so gossipy and unkind. She gazed thoughtfully upon Cap'n Amazon as he sat across from her at the breakfast table, and wondered how anybody could see in his bronzed face anything sinister.

That he was rather ridiculously gotten up, it was true. Those gold earrings! But then, she had seen several of the older men about the store wearing rings in their ears. If he did not always have that bright-colored kerchief on his head! But then, he might wear that because he was susceptible to neuralgia and did not wish to wear a hat all the time as seemed to have been Cap'n Abe's custom.

When he smiled at her and his eyes crinkled at the corners, he was as kindly of expression, she

thought, as Cap'n Abe himself. And he was a much better looking man than the brother who had gone away.

"Cap'n Amazon," she said to him, "I believe you must be just full of stories of adventure and wonderful happenings by sea and land. Uncle Abram said you had been everywhere."

Cap'n Amazon seemed to take a long breath, then cleared his throat, and said:

"I've been pretty nigh everywhere. Seen some funny corners of the world, too, Louise."

"You must tell me about your adventures," she said. "Your brother told me that you ran away to sea when you were only twelve years old and sailed on a long whaling voyage."

"Yep. *South Sea Belle.* Some old hooker, she was," said Cap'n Amazon briskly. "We was out three year and come home with our hold bustin' with ile, plenty of baleen, some sperm, and a lump of ambergris as big as a nail keg—or pretty nigh."

Right then and there he launched into relating how the wondrous find of ambergris came to be made, neglecting his breakfast to do so. He told it so vividly that Louise was enthralled. The picture of the whaling bark beating up to the dead and festering leviathan lying on the surface of the ocean to which the exploding gases of decomposition had brought the hulk, lived in her mind for days. The mate of the *South Sea Belle,* believing

the creature had died of the disease supposedly caused by the growth of the ambergris in its intestines, had insisted upon boarding the carcass. Driving away the clamorous and ravenous sea fowl, he had dug down with his blubber-spade into the vitals of the whale and recovered the gray, spongy, ill-smelling mass which was worth so great a sum to the perfumer.

"'Twas a big haul—one o' the biggest lumps o' ambergris ever brought into the port of New Bedford," concluded Cap'n Amazon. "Helped make the owners rich, and the Old Man, too. Course, I got my sheer; but a boy's sheer on a whaler them days wouldn't buy him no house and lot. So I went to sea again."

"You must have been at sea almost all your life, Cap'n Amazon."

"Pretty nigh. I ain't never lazed around on shore when there was a berth in a seaworthy craft to be had for the askin'. I let Abe do that," he added, in what Louise thought was a rather scornful tone.

"Why, I don't believe Uncle Abram has a lazy bone in his body! See the nice business he has built up here. And he told me he owned shares in several vessels and other property."

"That's true," Cap'n Amazon agreed promptly. "And a tidy sum in the Paulmouth National Bank. I got a letter to the bank folks he left to introduce

me, if I needed cash. Yes, Abe's done well enough that way. But he's the first Silt, I swanny! that ever stayed ashore."

"And now you are going to remain ashore yourself," she said, laughing.

"I'm going to try it, Louise. I've done my sheer of roaming about. Mebbe I'll settle down here for good."

"With Cap'n Abe? Won't that be fine?"

"Yep. With Abe," he muttered and remained silent for the rest of the meal.

On Saturday the store trade was expected to be larger than usual. Louise told Cap'n Amazon she would gladly help wait on the customers; but he would not listen to that for a moment.

"I'm not goin' to have you out there in that store for these folks to look over and pick to pieces, my girl," he said decidedly. "You stay aft and I'll 'tend to things for'ard and handle this crew. Besides, there's that half-grown lout, Amiel Perdue. Abe said he sometimes helped around. He knows the ship, alow and aloft, and how the stores is stowed."

The morning was still young when Betty came downstairs in hot rage and attacked Cap'n Amazon. It seemed she had gone up to give the chambers their usual weekly cleaning, and had found the room in which the captain slept locked against her. It was Cap'n Abe's room and it seemed it was

Cap'n Abe's custom—as it was Cap'n Amazon's—to make his own bed and keep his room tidy during the week. But Betty had always given it a thorough cleaning and changed the bed linen on Saturdays.

"What's that room locked for? I want to know what you mean?" the woman demanded of Cap'n Amazon. "Think I'm goin' to work in a house where doors is locked against me? I'm as honest as any Silt that ever hobbled on two laigs. Nex' thing, I cal'late, you'll be lockin' the coal shed and countin' the sticks in the woodpile."

She had much more to say—and said it. It seemed to make her feel better to do so. Cap'n Amazon looked coolly at her, but did not offer to take the key out of his trousers' pocket.

"What d'ye mean?" repeated Betty, breathless.

"I mean to keep my cabin locked," he told her in a perfectly passive voice, but in a manner that halted her suddenly, angry as she was. "I don't want no woman messin' with my berth nor with my duds. That door's no more locked against you than it is against my niece. You do the rest of your work and don't you worry your soul 'bout my cabin."

Louise, who was an observant spectator of this contest, expected at first that Betty would not stand the indignity—that she would resign from her situation on the spot.

But that hard, compelling stare of Cap'n Amazon seemed to tame her. And Betty Gallup was a person not easily tamed. She spluttered a little more, then returned to her work. Though she was sullen all day, she did not offer to reopen the discussion.

"What a master he must have been on his own quarter-deck," Louise thought. "And he *must* have seen rough times, as that Lawford Tapp suggested. My! he's not much like Cap'n Abe, after all."

But with her, Cap'n Amazon was as gentle as her own father. He stood on his dignity with the customers who came to the store, and with Betty; but he was most kindly toward Louise in every look and word.

That under his self-contained and stern exterior dwelt a very tender heart, the girl was sure. For the absent Cap'n Abe he appeared to feel a strong man's good-natured scorn for a weak one; but Louise saw him stand often before Jerry's cage, chirping to the bird and playing with him. And at such times there was moisture in Cap'n Amazon's eye.

"Blind's a bat! Poor little critter!" he would murmur. "All the sunshine does is to warm him; he can't see it no more. Out-o'-doors ain't nothin' to him now."

Nor would he allow anybody but himself to attend to the needs of poor little Jerry. He had

promised Abe, he said. He kept that promise faithfully.

Diddimus, the cat, was entirely another problem. At first, whenever he saw Cap'n Amazon approach, he howled and fled. Then, gradually, an unholy curiosity seemed to enthrall the big tortoise-shell. He would peer around corners at Cap'n Amazon, stare at him with wide yellow eyes through open doorways, leap upon the window sill and glower at the substitute storekeeper—in every way showing his overweening interest in the man. But he absolutely would not go within arm's reach of him.

"I always did say a cat's a plumb fool," declared Cap'n Amazon. "They'll desert ship as soon as wink. Treacherous critters, the hull tribe. Why, when I was up country in Cuba once, I stopped at a man's hacienda and he had a tame wildcat—had had it from a kitten. Brought it up on a bottle himself.

"He thought a heap of that critter, and when he laid in his hammock under the trees—an' that was most of the time, for them Caribs are as lazy as the feller under the tree that wished for the cherries to fall in his mouth!—Yes, sir! when he laid in his hammock that yaller-eyed demon would lay in it, too, and purr like an ordinary cat.

"But a day come when the man fell asleep and

had a nightmare or something, and kicked out, cracking that cat on the snout with his heel. Next breath the cat had a chunk out o' his calf and if I hadn't been there with a gun he'd pretty near have eat the feller!"

The personal touch always entered into Cap'n Amazon's stories. He had always been on the spot when the thing in point happened—and usually he was the heroic and central figure. No foolish modesty stayed his tongue when it came to recounting adventures.

He had all his wits, as well as all his wit, about him, had Cap'n Amazon. This was shown by an occurrence that very Saturday afternoon.

Milt Baker, like the other neighbors, was becoming familiar, if not friendly, with the substitute storekeeper and, leaning on the showcase, Milt said:

"Leave me have a piece of Brown Mule, Cap'n Am'zon. I'm all out o' chewin'. Put it on the book and Mandy'll pay for it."

"Avast there!" Cap'n Amazon returned. "Seems to me I got something in the bill o' ladin' 'bout that," and he drew forth the long memorandum Cap'n Abe had made to guide his substitute's treatment of certain customers. "No," the substitute storekeeper said, shaking his head negatively. "Can't do it."

"Why not, I want to know?" blustered Milt.

"I guess my credit's good." He already had the Brown Mule in his hand.

"Your *wife's* credit seems to be good," Cap'n Amazon returned firmly. "But here's what I find here: 'Don't trust Milt Baker for Brown Mule 'cause Mandy makes him pay cash for his tobacker and rum. We don't sell no rum.' That's enough, young man."

Milt might have tried to argue the case with Cap'n Abe; but not with Cap'n Amazon. There was something in the steady look of the latter that caused the shiftless clam digger to dig down into his pocket for the nickel, pay it over, and walk grumblingly out of the store.

"Does beat all what a fool a woman will be," commented Cap'n Amazon, rather enigmatically; only Louise, who heard him, realized fully what his thought was. Jealous and hard-working Mandy Baker had chosen for herself a handicap in the marriage game.

CHAPTER X

WHAT LOUISE THINKS

SUNDAY morning such a hush pervaded the store on the Shell Road, and brooded over its surroundings, as Lou Grayling had seldom experienced save in the depths of the wilderness.

She beheld a breeze-swept sea from her window with no fishing boats going out. There was nobody on the clam flats, although the tide was just right at dawn. The surfman from the patrol station beyond The Beaches paced to the end of his beat dressed in his best, like a man merely taking a Sunday morning stroll.

The people she saw seemed to be changed out of their everyday selves. Not only were they in Sabbath garb, but they had on their Sabbath manner. Even to Milt Baker, the men were cleanly shaven and wore fresh cotton shirts of their wives' laundering.

Cap'n Amazon appeared from his "cabin" when the first church bells began to ring, arrayed in a much wrinkled but very good suit of "go ashore" clothes of blue, which were possibly those he had worn when he arrived at the store on the Shell

Road. He wore a hard, glazed hat of an old-fashioned naval shape and, instead of the usual red bandana, he wore a black silk handkerchief tied about his head.

Just why he always kept his crown thus swathed, Louise was very desirous of knowing. Yet she did not feel like asking him such a very personal question. Had it been Cap'n Abe she would not for a moment have hesitated. Louise had heard of men being scalped by savages and she was almost tempted to believe that this had happened to Cap'n Amazon in one of his wild encounters.

"We'll go to the First Church, Niece Louise," he said firmly. "Abe always did. These small-fry craft, like the Mariner's Chapel, are all right, I don't dispute; but they are lacking in ballast. It's in my mind to attend the church that's the most like a well-founded, deep-sea craft."

Louise was more impressed than amused by this philosophy. The captain seemed to have put on his "Sunday face" like everybody else. As they came out of the yard old Washington Gallup hobbled by, but instead of stopping to chatter inconsequently, for he was an inveterate gossip, he saluted the captain respectfully and hobbled on.

Indeed, the captain was a figure on this day to command profound respect. It is no trick at all for a big man to look dignified and impressive; but Cap'n Amazon was not a big man. However, in

his blue pilot-cloth suit, cut severely plain, and with his hard black hat on his head he made a veritable picture of what a master-mariner should be.

On his quarter-deck, in fair or foul weather, Louise was sure that he had never lacked the respect of his crew or their confidence. He was distinctly a man to command—a leader and director by nature. He was, indeed, different from the seemingly easy-going, gentle-spoken Cap'n Abe, the storekeeper.

They had scarcely started up the Shell Road when the whir of a fast-running automobile sounded behind them and the mellow hoot of a horn. Louise turned to see a great touring car take the curve from the direction of The Beaches and glide swiftly toward them. Lawford Tapp was guiding the car.

"Then he's a chauffeur as well as fisherman and boatman," she thought.

She could not see how he was dressed under the coat he wore; but he touched his cap to her and Cap'n Amazon as he drove by.

Beside Lawford on the driving seat was a plump little man who seemed to be violently quarreling with the chauffeur. In the tonneau was a matronly woman and three girls including "L'Enfant Terrible," all, Louise thought, rather overdressed.

"Those folks, so I'm told," said Cap'n Amazon

placidly, come from that big house on the p'int—as far as you can see from our windows. More money than good sense, I guess. Though the man, he comes of good old Cape stock. But I guess that blood can de-te-ri-orate, as the feller said. Ain't much of it left in the young folks, pretty likely. They just laze around and play all the time. If 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' you can take it from me, Niece Louise, that all play and no work makes Jill a pretty average useless girl. Yes, sir!"

To the First Church it was quite a walk, up Main Street beyond the Inn and the post-office. There was some little bustle on Main Street at church-going time for some of the vacation visitors —those of more modest pretensions than the occupants of the cottages at The Beaches—had already arrived.

At the head of the church aisle Cap'n Amazon spoke apologetically to the usher:

"Young man, my brother, Mr. Abram Silt, hires a pew here; but I don't rightly know its bearings. Would you mind showin' me and my niece the course?"

They were accommodated. After service several shook hands with them; but Louise noticed that many cast curious glances at the black silk handkerchief on Cap'n Amazon's head and did not come near. Despite his dignity and the reverence

of his bearing, he did look peculiar with that kerchief swathing his crown.

Gusty Durgin, the waitress at the Cardhaven Inn, claimed acquaintanceship after church with Louise.

"There's goin' to be more of your crowd come to-morrow, Miss Grayling," she said. "Some of 'em's goin' to stop with us at the Inn. How you makin' out down there to Cap'n Abe's? Land sakes! *that* ain't Cap'n Abe!"

"It is his brother, Cap'n Amazon Silt," explained Louise.

"I want to know! He looks amazin' funny, don't he? Not much like Cap'n Abe. You see, my folks live down the Shell Road. My ma married again. D'rius Vleet. Nice man, but a Dutchman. I don't take up much with these furiners.

"Now! what was I sayin'? Oh! The boss tells me there's a Mr. Judson Bane of your crowd goin' to stop with us. Sent a telegraph dispatch for a room to be saved for him. With bath! Land sakes! ain't the whole ocean big enough for him to take a bath in? We ain't got nothing like that. And two ladies—I forget their names. You know Mr. Bane?"

"I have met him—once," confessed Louise.

"Some swell he is, I bet," Gusty declared. "I'm goin' to speak to him. Mebbe he can get me into the company. I ain't so *aw*-ful fat. I seen a picture over to Paulmouth last night where there

was a girl bigger'n I am, and she took a re'l sad part.

"She cried re'l tears. *I* can do that. All I got to do is to think of something re'l mis'rable—like the time our old brahma hen, Beauty, got bit by Esek Coe's dog, and ma had to saw her up. Then the tears'll squeeze right out, *just as easy!*"

Louise thought laughter would overcome her "just as easy" despite the day and place. She knew a hearty burst of laughter in the church edifice would amaze and shock the lingering congregation.

Seeing that Cap'n Amazon was busy with some men he had met, the girl walked out to the little vestibule of the church. Here a number of women and men were discussing various matters—the sermon, the weather, clamming, boating, and the colony at The Beaches. Two women stood apart from the others and presently Louise was attracted to them by the sound of Lawford Tapp's name.

"I dunno who he is exactly, bein' somethin' o' a stranger here," one of the women said. "But I was told he was some poor relation who allers lived among the fisher folk. But he does seem to know how to run thet autermobile, don't he?"

"I should say!" returned the other woman. "An' he's well spoken, too—from what I heard him say down to the store."

"Yes, I know that too. Well, I hope he buys

the outfit—Jimmy wants to sell it bad enough—an' needs the money, believe me!" And thereupon the two women took their departure.

The conversation hung in Louisa's mind and she looked exceedingly thoughtful when Cap'n Amazon broke away from those with whom he had been talking and joined her.

"Nice man, that Reverend Jimson, I guess," the captain said, as they wended their way homeward; "but he's got as many ways of holdin' a feller as an octopus. And lemme tell you, that's a plenty! Arms seem to grow on devilfish 'while you wait' as the feller said.

"I sha'n't ever forget the time I was a boy in the old *Mary Bedloe* brig, out o' Boston, loaded with sundries for Jamaica, to bring back molasses —and something a leetle mite stronger. That's 'bout as near as I ever got to having traffic with liquor—and 'twas an unlucky v'y'ge all the way through.

"Before we ever got the rum aboard," pursued Cap'n Amazon, "on our way down there, our water went bad. Yes, sir! Water does get stringy sometimes on long v'y'ges. It useter on whalin' cruises —get all stringy and bad; but after she'd worked clear she'd be fit to drink again.

"But this time in the *Mary Bedloe* it was something mysterious happened to the drinking water. Made the hull crew sick. Cap'n Jim Braman was

master. He was a good navigator, but an awful profane man. Swore without no reason to it.

"Well—— Where was I? Oh, yes! We had light airs in the Caribbean for once, and didn't make no more headway in a day than a brick barge goin' upstream. We come to an island—something more than a key—and Cap'n Braman ordered a boat's crew ashore for water. I was in the second's boat so I went. We found good water easy and the second officer, who was a nice young chap, let us scour around on our own hook for fruit and such, after we'd filled the barrels.

"I was all for shellfish them days, and I see some big mussels attached to the rocks, it bein' low water. Some o' them mussels, when ye gut 'em same as ye would deep-sea clams, make the nicest fry you ever tasted.

"Wal," said Cap'n Amazon, walking sedately home from church with his amused niece on his arm, "I wanted a few of them mussels. There was a mud bottom and so the water was black. Just as I reached for the first mussel I felt something creeping around my left leg. I thought it was eel-grass; then I thought it was an eel.

"Next thing I knowed it took holt like a leech in half a dozen places. I jumped; but I didn't jump far. There was two o' the things had me, and that left leg o' mine was fast as a duck's foot in the mud!"

"Oh, Uncle Amazon!" gasped Louise.

"Yep. A third arm whipped out o' the water had helt me round the waist tighter'n any girl of my acquaintance ever lashed her best feller. Land sakes, that devilfish certainly give me a hi-mighty hug!

"But I had what they call down in the Spanish speakin' islands a machette—a big knife for cuttin' your way through the jungle. I hauled that out o' the waistband of my pants and I began slicing at them snake-like arms of the critter and yelling like all get-out.

"More scare't than hurt, I reckon. I was a young feller, as I tell you, and hadn't seen so much of the world as I have since," continued Cap'n Amazon. "But the arms seemed fairly to grow on that devilfish. I wasn't hacked loose when the second officer come runnin' with his gun. I dragged the critter nearer inshore and he got a look at it. Both barrels went into that devilfish, and that was more than it could stomach; so it let go," finished the captain.

"Mercy! what an experience," commented Louise, wondering rather vaguely why the minister of the First Church had reminded her uncle of this octopus.

"Yes. 'Twas *some*," agreed Cap'n Amazon. "But let's step along a little livelier, Niece Louise. I'm goin' to give you a re'l fisherman's chowder

for dinner, an' I want to git the pork and onions over. I like my onions well browned before I slice in the potaters."

Cap'n Amazon insisted on doing most of the cooking, just as Cap'n Abe had. Louise had baked some very delicate pop-overs for breakfast that morning and the captain ate his share with appreciation.

"Pretty average nice, I call 'em, for soft-fodder," he observed. "But, land sakes! give me something hearty and kind of solid for reg'lar eating. Ordinary man would starve pretty handy, I guess, on breadstuff like this."

The chowder was both as hearty and as appetizing as one could desire. Nor would the captain allow Louise to wash the dishes afterward.

"No, girl. I'll clean up this mess. You go out and see how fur you can walk on that hard beach now it's slack tide. You ain't been up there to Tapp P'int yit and seen that big house that belongs to the candy king. Neither have I, of course," he added; "but they been tellin' me about it in the store."

Louise accepted the suggestion and started to walk up the beach; but she did not get far. There was a private dock running out beyond low-water mark just below the very first bungalow. She saw several men coming down the steps from the top of the bluff to the shore and the bathhouses; a big

camera was set up on the sands. This must be Bozewell's bungalow, she decided; the one engaged by the moving picture people.

If Judson Bane was to be leading man of the company the picture was very likely to be an important production; for Bane would not leave the legitimate stage for any small salary. Seeing no women in the party and that the men were heading up the beach, Louise went no farther in that direction, and instead walked out upon the private dock to its end.

It was not until then that she saw, shooting inshore, the swift launch in which Lawford Tapp had come over in the morning previous. The wind being off the land she had not heard its exhaust. In three minutes the launch glided in beside the dock where she stood.

"Come for a sail, Miss Grayling?" he asked her, with his very widest smile. "I'll take you out around Gull Rocks."

"Oh! I am not sure——"

"Surely you're not down here to work on Sunday?" and he glanced at the actors.

She laughed. "Oh, no, Mr. Tapp. I do not work on Sundays. Uncle Amazon would not even let me wash the dishes."

"I should think not," murmured Lawford with an appreciative glance at her ungloved hands. "He's a pretty decent old fellow, I guess. Will

you come aboard? She's perfectly safe, Miss Grayling."

If he had invited her to enter the big touring car he had driven that morning, to go for a "joy ride," Louise Grayling would certainly have refused. To go on a pleasure trip at the invitation of a chauffeur in his employer's car was quite out of consideration.

But this was somehow different, or so it seemed. She hesitated not because of who or what he was (or what she believed him to be), but because she had seen something in his manner and expression of countenance that warned her he was a young man not to be lightly encouraged.

In that moment of reflection Louise Grayling asked herself if she felt that he possessed a more interesting personality than almost any man she had ever met socially before. She did so consider him, she told herself, and so—she stepped aboard the launch.

She did not need his hand to help her to the seat beside him. She was boatwise. He pushed off, starting his engine; and they were soon chug-chugging out upon the limitless sea.

The launch glided in beside the dock where she stood

CHAPTER XI

THE LEADING MAN

"I saw you with Cap'n Amazon going to church this morning," Lawford said. "To the First Church, I presume?"

"And you?"

"Oh, I drove the folks over to Paulmouth. There is an Episcopal Church there and the girls think it's more fashionable. You don't see many soft-collared shirts among the Paulmouth Episcopalians."

There spoke the "native," Louise thought; and she smiled.

"It scarcely matters, I fancy, which denomination one attends. It is the spirit in which we worship that counts."

He gazed upon her seriously. "You're a thoughtful girl, I guess. I should not have looked for that—in your business."

"In my business? Oh!"

"We outsiders have an idea that people in the theatrical line are a peculiar class unto themselves," Lawford went on.

"But I——" On the point of telling him of his

mistake she hesitated. He was unobservant of her amusement and went on with seriousness:

"I guess I'm pretty green after all. I don't know much about the world—your world, at least. I love the sea, and sailing, and all the seashore has to offer. Sometimes I'm out here alone all day long."

"But what is it doing for you?" she asked him rather sharply. "Surely there can be very little in it, when all's said and done. A man with your intelligence—you have evidently had a good education."

"I suppose I don't properly appreciate that," he admitted.

"And to really waste your time like this—loafing longshore, and sailing boats, and—and driving an automobile. Why! you are a regular beach comber, Mr. Tapp. It's not much of an outlook for a man I should think."

She suddenly stopped, realizing that she was showing more interest than the occasion called for. Lawford was watching her with smoldering eyes.

"Don't you think it is a nice way to live?" he asked. "The sea is really wonderful. I have learned more about sea and shore already than you can find in all the books. Do you know where the gulls nest, and how they hatch their young? Did you ever watch a starfish feeding? Do you know

what part of the shellfish is the scallop of commerce? Do you know that every seventh wave is almost sure to be larger than its fellows? Do you——"

"Oh, it may be very delightful," Louise interrupted this flow of badly catalogued information to say. He expressed exactly her own desires. Nothing could be pleasanter than spending the time, day after day, learning things "at first hand" about nature. For her father—and of course for her—to do this was quite proper, Louise thought. But not for this young fisherman, who should be making his way in the world. "Where is it getting you?" she demanded.

"Getting me?"

"Yes," she declared with vigor, yet coloring a little. "A man should work."

"But I'm not idle."

"He should work to get ahead—to save—to make something of himself—to establish himself in life—to have a home."

He smiled then and likewise colored. "I—I—— A man can't do that alone. Especially the home-making part."

"You don't suppose any of these girls about here—the nice girls, I mean—want a man who is not a home provider?"

He laughed outright then. "Some of them get that kind, I fear, Miss Grayling. Mandy Card, for instance."

"Are *you* planning to be another Milt Baker?" she responded with scorn.

"Oh, now, you're hard on a fellow," he complained. "I'm always busy. And, fixed as I am, I don't see why I should grub and moil at unpleasant things."

Louise shrugged her shoulders and made a gesture of finality. "You are impossible, I fear," she said and put aside—not without a secret pang—her interest in Lawford Tapp, an interest which had been developing since she first met the young man.

He allowed the subject to lapse and began telling her about the ledges on which the rock cod and tautog schooled; where bluefish might be caught on the line, and snappers in the channels going into the Haven.

"Good sport. I must take you out in the *Merry Andrew,*" he said. "She's a peach of a sailer—and my very own."

"Oh! do you own the sloop, Mr. Tapp?"

"I guess I do! And no money could buy her," he cried with boyish enthusiasm. "She's the best lap-streak boat anywhere along the Cape. And *sail!*"

"I love sailing," she confessed, with brightening visage.

"Say! You just set the day—so it won't conflict with your work—and I'll take you out," he declared eagerly.

"But won't it conflict with *your* duties?"

"Humph!" he returned. "I thought your idea was that I didn't have any duties. However," and he smiled again, "you need not worry about that. When you want to go I will arrange everything so that I'll have a free day."

"But not alone, Mr. Tapp?"

"No," he agreed gravely. "I suppose that wouldn't do. But we can rake up a chaperon somewhere."

"Oh, yes!" and Louise dimpled again. "We'll take Betty Gallup along. She's an able seaman, too."

"I *bet* she is!" ejaculated Lawford with emphasis.

He handled the boat with excellent judgment, and his confidence caused Louise to see no peril when they ran almost on the edge of the maelstrom over Gull Rocks. "I know this coast by heart," he said. "I believe there's not one of them sailing out of the Haven who is a better pilot than I am. At least, I've learned *that* outside of textbooks," and he smiled at her.

Louise wondered how good an education this scion of a Cape Cod family really had secured. The longer she was in his company the more she was amazed by his language and manners. She noted, too, that he was much better dressed to-day. His flannels were not new; indeed they were rather

shabby. But the garments' original cost must have been prohibitive for a young man in his supposed position. Very likely, however, they had been given him, second-hand, by some member of the family for which he worked.

The more she saw of him, and the more she thought about it, the greater was Louise's disappointment in Lawford Tapp. She was not exactly sorry she had come out with him in the motor boat; but her feeling toward him was distinctly different when she landed, from that which had been roused in her first acquaintance.

It was true he was not an idle young man—not exactly. But he betrayed an ability and a training that should already have raised him above his present situation in the social scale, as Louise understood it. She was disappointed, and although she bade Lawford Tapp good-bye pleasantly she was secretly unhappy.

The next morning she chanced to need several little things that were not to be found in Cap'n Abe's store and she went uptown in quest of them. At midday she was still thus engaged, so she went to the Inn for lunch.

Gusty Durgin spied her as she entered and found a small table for Louise where she would be alone. A fat woman whom Gusty mentioned as "the boss's sister, Sara Ann Whipple," helped wait upon the guests. Several of the business men of the town,

as well as the guests of the Inn, took their dinners there.

To one man, sitting alone at a table not far distant, Louise saw that Gusty was particularly attentive. He was typically a city man; one could not for a moment mistake him for a product of the Cape.

He was either a young-old or an old-young looking man, his hair graying at the temples, but very luxuriant and worn rather long. A bright complexion and beautifully kept teeth and hands marked him as one more than usually careful of his personal appearance. Indeed, his character seemed to border on that of the exquisite.

His countenance was without doubt attractive, for it was intelligent and expressed a quiet humor that seemed to have much kindliness mixed with it. His treatment of the unsophisticated Gusty, who hovered about him with open admiration, held just that quality of good-natured tolerance which did not offend the waitress but that showed discerning persons that he considered her only in the light of an artless child.

"D'you know who that is?" Gusty whispered to Louise when she found time to do so. The plump girl was vastly excited; her hands shook as she set down the dishes. "That's Mr. Judson Bane."

"Yes. I chanced to meet Mr. Bane once, as I told you," smiled Louise, keeping up the illusion of

her own connection with the fringe of the theatrical world.

"And Miss Louder and Miss Noyes have come. My, you ought to see *them!*" said the emphatic waitress. "They've got one o' them flivvers. Some gen'leman friend of Miss Noyes' lent it to 'em. They're out now hunting what they call a garridge for it. That's a fancy name for a barn, I guess. And dressed!" gasped Gusty finally. "They're dressed to kill!"

"We shall have lively times around Cardhaven now, sha'n't we?" Louise commented demurely.

"We almost always do in summer," Gusty agreed with a sigh. "Last summer an Italian lost his trick bear in the pine woods 'twixt here and Paulmouth and the young 'uns didn't darest to go out of the houses for a week. Poor critter! When they got him he was fair foundered eating green cranberries in the bogs."

"Something doing," no matter what, was Gusty's idea of life as it should be. Louise finished her meal and went out of the dining-room. In the hall her mesh bag caught in the latch of the screen door and dropped to the floor. Somebody was right at hand to pick it up for her.

"Allow me," said a deep and cultivated voice. "Extremely annoying."

It was Mr. Bane, hat in hand. He restored the bag, and as Louise quietly thanked him they walked

out of the Inn together. Louise was returning to Cap'n Abe's store, and she turned in that direction before she saw that Mr. Bane was bound down the hill, too.

"I fancy we are fellow-outcasts," he said. "You, too, are a visitor to this delightfully quaint place?"

"Yes, Mr. Bane," she returned frankly. "Though I can claim relationship to some of these Cardhaven folk. My mother came from the Cape."

"Indeed? It is not such a far cry to Broadway from any point of the compass, after all, is it?" and he smiled engagingly down at her.

"You evidently do not remember me, Mr. Bane?" she said, returning his smile. "Aboard the Anders Liner, coming up from Jamaica, two years ago this last winter? Professor Ernest Grayling is my father."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "You are Miss Grayling? I remember you and your father clearly. Fancy meeting you here!" and Mr. Bane insisted on taking her hand. "And how is the professor? No need to ask after your health, Miss Grayling."

As they walked on together Louise took more careful note of the actor. He had the full habit of a well-fed man, but was not gross. He was athletic, indeed, and his head was poised splendidly on broad shoulders. Louise saw that his face was mas-

saged until it was as pink and soft as a baby's, without a line of close shaving to be detected. The network of fine wrinkles at the outer corners of his eyes was scarcely distinguishable. That there was a faint dust of powder upon his face she noted, too.

Judson Bane was far, however, from giving the impression of effeminacy. Quite the contrary. He looked able to do heroic things in real life as well as in the drama. And as their walk and conversation developed, Louise Grayling found the actor to be an interesting person.

He spoke well and without bombast upon any subject she ventured on. His vocabulary was good and his speaking voice one of the most pleasing she had ever heard.

So interested was Louise in what Mr. Bane said that she scarcely noticed Lawford Tapp who passed and bowed to her, only inclining her head in return. Therefore she did not catch the expression on Lawford's face.

"A fine-looking young fisherman," observed Mr. Bane patronizingly.

"Yes. Some of them are good-looking and more intelligent than you would believe," Louise rejoined carelessly. She had put Lawford Tapp aside as inconsequential.

CHAPTER XII

THE DESCENT OF AUNT EUPHEMIA

It was midforenoon the following day, and quite a week after Louise Grayling's arrival at Cap'n Abe's store on the Shell Road, that the stage was set for a most surprising climax.

The spirit of gloom still hovered over Betty Gallup in the rear premises where she was sweeping and dusting and scrubbing. Her idea of cleanliness indoors was about the same as that of a smart skipper of an old-time clipper ship.

"If that woman ain't holystonin' the deck ev'ry day she thinks we're wadin' in dirt, boot-laig high," growled Cap'n Amazon.

"Cleanliness is next to godliness!" quoted Louise, who was in the store at the moment.

"Land sakes!" ejaculated the captain. "It's next door to a lot of other things, seems like, too. I shouldn't say that Bet Gallup was spillin' over with piety."

Louise, laughing softly, went to the door. There was a cloud of dust up the road and ahead of it came a small automobile. Cap'n Amazon was singing, in a rather cracked voice:

"'The Boundin' Biller, Captain Hanks,
She was hove flat down on the Western Banks,'——"

With a saucy blast of its horn the automobile flashed past the store. There were two young women in it, one driving. Louise felt sure they were Miss Louder and Miss Noyes, mentioned by Gusty Durgin the day before, and their frocks and hats were all that their names suggested.

"Them contraptions," Cap'n Amazon broke off in his ditty to say, "go past so swift that you can't tell rightly whether they got anybody to the helm or not. Land sakes, here comes another! They're getting as common as sandfleas on Horseneck Bar, and Washy Gallup says that's a-plenty."

He did not need to come to the door to make this discovery of the approach of the second machine. There sounded another blast from an auto horn and a considerable racket of clashing gears.

"Land sakes!" Cap'n Amazon added. "Is it going to heave to here?"

Louise had already entered the living-room, bound for her chamber to see if, by chance, Betty had finished dusting there. She did not hear the second automobile stop nor the cheerful voice of its gawky driver as he said to his fare:

"This is the place, ma'am. This is Cap'n Abe's."

His was the only car in public service at the Paulmouth railroad station and Willy Peebles seldom had a fare to Cardhaven. Noah Coffin's ark was good enough for most Cardhaven folk if they did not own equipages of their own.

When Willy reached around and snapped open the door of the covered car a lady stepped out and, like a Newfoundland after a plunge into the sea, shook herself. The car was a cramped vehicle and the ride had been dusty. Her clothing was plentifully powdered; but her face was not. That was heated, perspiring, and expressed a mixture of indignation and disapproval.

"Are you sure this is the place, young man?" she demanded.

"This is Cap'n Abe Silt's," repeated Willy.

"Why—it doesn't look——"

"Want your suitcase, ma'am?" asked Willy.

"Wait. I am not sure. I—I must see if I——. I may not stay. Wait," she repeated, still staring about the neighborhood.

As a usual thing, she was not a person given to uncertainty, in either manner or speech. Her somewhat haughty glance, her high-arched nose, her thin lips, all showed decision and a scorn of other people's opinions and wishes. But at this moment she was plainly nonplused.

"There—there doesn't seem to be anybody about," she faltered.

"Oh, go right into the store, ma'am. Cap'n Abe's somewheres around. He always is."

Thus encouraged by the driver the woman stalked up the store steps. She was not a ponderous woman, but she was tall and carried considerable flesh. She could carry this well, however, and did. Her traveling dress and hat were just fashionable enough to be in the mode, but in no extreme. This well-bred, haughty, but perspiring woman approached the entrance to Cap'n Abe's store in a spirit of frank disapproval.

On the threshold she halted with an audible gasp, indicating amazement. Her glance swept the interior of the store with its strange conglomeration of goods for sale—on the shelves the rows of glowingly labeled canned goods, the blue papers of macaroni, the little green cartons of fishhooks; the clothing hanging in groves, the rows and rows of red mittens; tiers of kegs of red lead, barrels of flour, boxes of hardtack; hanks of tarred groundline, coils of several sizes of cordage, with a small kedge anchor here and there. It was not so much a store as it was a warehouse displaying many articles the names and uses for which the lady did not even know.

The wondrous array of goods in Cap'n Abe's store did not so much startle the visitor, as the figure that rose from behind the counter, where he was stooping at some task.

She might be excused her sudden cry, for Cap'n Amazon was an apparition to shock any nervous person. The bandana he wore seemed, if possible, redder than usual this morning; his earrings glistened; his long mustache seemed blacker and glossier than ever. As he leaned characteristically upon the counter, his sleeves rolled to his elbows, the throat-latch of his shirt open, he did not give one impression of a peaceful storekeeper, to say the least.

"Mornin', ma'am," said Cap'n Amazon, not at all embarrassed. "What can I do for you, ma'am?"

"You—you are not Captain Silt?" the visitor almost whispered in her agitation.

"Yes, ma'am; I am."

"Captain Abram Silt?"

"No, ma'am; I ain't. I'm Cap'n Am'zon, his brother. What can I do for you?" he repeated. The explanation of his identity may have been becoming tedious; at least, Cap'n Amazon gave it grimly.

"Is—is my niece, Louise Grayling, here?" queried the lady, her voice actually trembling, her gaze glued to the figure behind the counter.

"'Hem!" said the captain, clearing his throat. "Who did you say you was, ma'am?"

"I did not say," the visitor answered stiffly enough now. "I asked you a question."

"Likely—likely," agreed Cap'n Amazon. "But you intimated that you was the a'nt of a party by the name of Grayling. I happen to be her uncle myself. Her mother was my ha'f-sister. I don't remember—jest *who'd* you say you was, ma'am?"

"I am her father's own sister," cried the lady in desperation.

"Oh, yes! I see!" murmured Cap'n Amazon. "Then you must be her A'nt 'Phemie. I've heard Louise speak of you. Tubbesure!"

"I am Mrs. Conroth," said Mrs. Euphemia Conroth haughtily.

"Happy to make your acquaintance," said Cap'n Amazon, bobbing his head and putting forth his big hand. Mrs. Conroth scorned the hand, raised her lorgnette and stared at the old mariner as though he were some curious specimen from the sea that she had never observed before. Cap'n Amazon smiled whimsically and looked down at his stained and toil-worn palm.

"I see you're nigh-sighted, ma'am. Some of us git that way as we grow older. I never have been bothered with short eyesight myself."

"I wish to see my niece at once," Mrs. Conroth said, flushing a little at his suggestion of her advancing years.

"Come right in," he said, lifting the flap in the counter.

Mrs. Conroth glared around the store through her glass. "Cannot Louise come here?" she asked helplessly.

"We live back o' the shop—and overhead," explained Cap'n Amazon. "Come right in. I'll have Betty Gallup call Louise."

Bristling her indignation like a porcupine its quills, the majestic woman followed the spry figure of the captain. Her first glance over the old-fashioned, homelike room elicited a pronounced sniff.

"Catarrh, ma'am?" suggested the perfectly composed Cap'n Amazon. "This strong salt air ought to do it a world of good. I've known a sea v'y'ge to cure the hardest cases. They tell me lots of 'em come down here to the Cape afflicted that way and go home cured."

Mrs. Conroth stared with growing comprehension at Cap'n Amazon. It began to percolate into her brain that possibly this strange-looking seaman possessed qualities of apprehension for which she had not given him credit.

"Sit down, ma'am," said Cap'n Amazon hospitably. "Abe ain't here, but I cal'late he'd want me to do the honors, and assure you that you are welcome. He always figgers on having a spare berth for anybody that boards us, as well as a seat at the table.

"Betty," he added, turning to the amazed Mrs.

Gallup, just then appearing at the living-room door, "tell Louise her A'nt 'Phemie is here, will you?"

"Say Mrs. Conroth, woman," corrected the lady tartly.

Betty scowled and went away, muttering: "Who's a 'woman,' I want to know? I ain't one no more'n *she* is," and it can be set down in the log that the "able seaman" began by being no friend of Aunt Euphemia's.

It was with a sinking at her heart that Louise heard of her aunt's arrival. She had written to her Aunt Euphemia before leaving New York that she had decided to try Cape Cod for the summer and would go to her mother's relative, Captain Abram Silt. Again, on reaching the store on the Shell Road, she had dutifully written a second letter announcing her arrival.

She had known perfectly well that some time she would have to "pay the piper." Aunt Euphemia would never overlook such a thing. Louise was sure of that. But the idea that the Poughkeepsie lady would follow her to Cardhaven never for a moment entered Louise's thought.

She had put off this reckoning until the fall—until the return of daddy-professor. But here Aunt Euphemia had descended upon her as unexpectedly as the Day of Wrath spoken of in Holy Writ.

As she came down the stairs she heard her uncle's voice in the living-room. Something had started him upon a tale of adventure above and beyond the usual run of his narrative.

"Yes, *ma'am,*" he was saying, "them that go down to the sea in ships, as the Good Book says, sartain sure meet with hair-raisin' experiences. You jumped then, ma'am, when old Jerry let out a peep. He was just tryin' his voice I make no doubt. Ain't sung for months they say. I didn't know why till I—I found out t'other day he was blind—stone blind.

"Some thinks birds don't know nothing, or ain't much account in this man-world—— But, as I was sayin', I lay another course. I'll never forget one v'y'ge I made on the brigantine *Hermione.* That was 'fore the day of steam-winches and we carried a big crew—thirty-two men for'ard and a big after-guard.

"Well, ma'am! Whilst she was hove down in a blow off the Horn an albatross came aboard. You know what they be—the one bird in all the seven seas that don't us'ally need a dry spot for the sole of his foot. If Noah had sent out one from the ark he'd never have come back with any sprig of promise for the land-hungry wanderers shut up in that craft.

"'Tis bad luck they do say to kill an albatross. Some sailors claim ev'ry one o' them is inhabited

by a lost soul. I ain't superstitious myself. I'm only telling you what happened.

"Dunno why that bird boarded us. Mebbe he was hurt some way. Mebbe 'twas fate. But he swooped right inboard, his wing brushing the men at the wheel. Almost knocked one o' them down. He was a Portugee man named Tony Spadello and he had a re'l quick temper.

"Tony had his knife out in a flash and jumped for the creature. The other steersman yelled (one man couldn't rightly hold the wheel alone, the sea was kicking up such a bobberation) but Tony's one slash was enough. The albatross tumbled right down on the deck, a great cut in its throat. It bled like a dog shark, cluttering up the deck."

"Horrid!" murmured Mrs. Conroth with a shudder of disgust.

"Yes—the poor critter!" agreed Cap'n Amazon. "I never like to see innocent, dumb brutes killed. Cap'n Hicks—he was a young man in them days, and boastful—cursed the mess it made, yanked off the bird's head, so's to have the beautiful pink beak of it made into the head of a walkin'-stick, and ordered Tony to throw the carcass overboard and clean up the deck. I went to the wheel in his stead, with Jim Ledward. Jim says to me: 'Am'zon, that bird'll foller us. Can't git rid of it so easy as *that.*'

"I thought he was crazy," went on Cap'n Ama-

zon, shaking his head. "I wasn't projectin' much about superstitions. No, ma'am! We had all we could do—the two of us—handlin' the wheel with them old graybacks huntin' us. Them old he waves hunt in droves mostly, and when one did board us we couldn't scarce get clear of the wash of it before another would rise right up over our rail and fill the waist, or mebbe sweep ev'rything clean from starn to bowsprit.

"It was sundown (only we hadn't seen no sun in a week) when that albatross was killed and hove overboard. At four bells of the mornin' watch one o' them big waves come inboard. It washed everything that wasn't lashed into the scuppers and took one of our smartest men overboard with it. But there, floatin' in the wash it left behind, was the dead albatross!"

"Oh, how terrible!" murmured Mrs. Conroth, watching Cap'n Amazon much as a charmed bird is said to watch a snake.

"Yes, ma'am; tough to lose a shipmate like that, I agree. But that was only the beginning. Cap'n Hicks pitched the thing overboard himself. Couldn't ha' got one of the men, mebbe, to touch it. Jim Ledward says: 'Skipper, ye make nothin' by that. It's too late. Bad luck's boarded us.'

"And sure 'nough it had," sighed Cap'n Amazon, as though reflecting. "You never did see such a time as we had in gettin' round the Cape. And

we got it good in the roarin' forties, too—hail, sleet, snow, rain, and lightnin' all mixed, and the sea a reg'lar hell's broth all the time."

"I *beg* of you, sir," breathed the lady, shuddering again. Cap'n Amazon, enthralled by his own narrative, steamed ahead without noticing her shocked expression.

"One hurricane on top of another—that's what we got. We lost four men overboard, includin' the third officer, one time and another. I was knocked down myself and got a broken arm—had it in a sling nine weeks. We got fever in a port that hadn't had such an epidemic in six months, and seven of the crew had to be took ashore.

"Bad luck dogged us and the ship. Only, it never touched the skipper or Tony Spadello—the only two that had handled the albatross. That is, not as far as I know. Last time I see Cappy Hicks he was carryin' his cane with the albatross beak for a handle; and Tony Spadello has made a barrel of money keeping shop on the Bedford docks.

"But birds have an influence in the world, I take it, like other folks. You wouldn't think, ma'am, how much store my brother Abe sets by old Jerry yonder."

Aunt Euphemia jumped up with an exclamation of relief. "Louise!" she uttered as she saw the girl, amusement in her eyes, standing in the

CHAPTER XIII

WASHY GALLUP'S CURIOSITY

"I DO not see how you can endure it, Louise! He is impossible—quite impossible! I never knew your tastes were low!"

Critical to the tips of her trembling fingers, Aunt Euphemia sat stiffly upright in Louise's bedroom rocking chair and uttered this harsh reflection upon her niece's good taste. Louise never remembered having seen her aunt so angry before. But she was provoked herself, and her determination to go her own way and spend her summer as she chose stiffened under the lash of the lady's criticism.

"What will our friends think of you?" demanded Mrs. Conroth. "I am horrified to have them know you ever remained overnight in such a place. There are the Perritons. They were on the train with me coming down from Boston. They are opening their house here at what they call The Beaches—one of the most exclusive colonies on the coast, I understand. They insisted upon my coming there at once, and I have promised to bring you with me."

"You have promised more than you can per-

form, Aunt Euphemia," Louise replied shortly. "I will remain here."

"Louise!"

"I will remain here with Cap'n Amazon. And with Uncle Abram when he returns. They are both dear old men——"

"That awful looking pirate!" gasped Mrs. Conroth.

"You do not know him," returned the girl. "You do not know how worthy and how kind he is."

"You have only known him a week yourself," remarked Aunt Euphemia. "What can a young girl like you know about these awful creatures—fishermen, sailors, and the like? How can you judge?"

Louise laughed. "Why, Auntie, you know I have seen much of the world and many more people than you have. And if I have not learned to judge those I meet by this time I shall never learn, though I grow to be as old as"—she came near saying "as you are," but substituted instead—"as Mrs. Methuselah. I shall remain here. I would not insult Cap'n Amazon or Cap'n Abe, by leaving abruptly and going with you to the Perritons' bungalow."

"But what shall I say to them?" wailed Aunt Euphemia.

"What have you already said?"

"I said I expected you were waiting for me at Cardhaven. I would not come over from Paulmouth in their car, but hurried on ahead. I wished to save you the disgrace—yes, *disgrace!*—of being found here in this—this country store. Ugh!" She shuddered again.

"I am determined that they shall not know your poor, dear father unfortunately married beneath him."

"Aunt Euphemia!" exclaimed Louise, her gray eyes flashing now. "Don't say that. It offends me. Daddy-prof never considered my mother or her people beneath his own station."

"Your father, Louise, is a fool!" was the lady's tart reply.

"As he is your brother as well as my father," Louise told her coldly, "I presume you feel you have a right to call him what you please. But I assure you, Aunt Euphemia, it does not please me to hear you do so."

"You are a very obstinate girl!"

"*That* attribute of my character I fancy I inherit from daddy-professor's side of the family," the girl returned bluntly.

"I shall be shamed to death! I must accept the Perritons' invitation. I already *have* accepted it. They will think you a very queer girl, to say the least."

"I am," her niece told her, the gray eyes smiling

again, for Louise was soon over her wrath. "Even daddy-prof says that."

"Because of his taking you all over the world with him as he did. I only wonder he did not insist upon your going on this present horrid cruise."

"No. I have begun to like my comfort too well," and now Louise laughed outright. "A mark of oncoming age, perhaps."

"You are a most unpleasant young woman, Louise."

Louise thought she might return the compliment with the exchange of but a single word; but she was too respectful to do so.

"I am determined to remain here," she repeated, "so you may as well take it cheerfully, auntie. If you intend staying with the Perritons any length of time, of course I shall see you often, and meet them. I haven't come down here to the Cape to play the hermit, I assure you. But I am settled here with Cap'n Amazon, and I am comfortable. So, why should I make any change?"

"But in this common house! With that awful looking old sailor! And the way he talks! The rough adventures he has experienced—and the way he relates them!"

"Why, I think he is charming. And his stories are jolly fun. He tells the most thrilling and interesting things! I have before heard people tell

about queer corners of the world—and been in some of them myself. Only the romance seems all squeezed out of such places nowadays. But when Cap'n Amazon was young!" she sighed.

"You should hear him tell of having once been wrecked on an island in the South Seas where there were only women left of the tribe inhabiting it, the men all having been killed in battle by a neighboring tribe. The poor sailors did not know whether those copper-colored Eves would decide to kill and eat them, or merely marry them."

"Louise!" Aunt Euphemia rose and fairly glared at her niece. "You show distinctly that association with these horrid people down here has already contaminated your mind. You are positively vulgar!"

She sailed out of the room, descended the stairs, and "beat up" through the living-room and store, as Betty Gallup said "with ev'ry stitch of canvas drawin' and a bone in her teeth." Louise agreed about the "bone"—she had given her Aunt Euphemia a hard one to gnaw on.

The girl followed Mrs. Conroth to the automobile and helped her in. Cap'n Amazon came to the store door as politely as though he were seeing an honored guest over the ship's side.

"Ask your A'nt 'Phemie to come again. Too bad she ain't satisfied to jine us here. Plenty o' cabin room. But if she's aimin' to anchor near by

she'll be runnin' in frequent I cal'late. Good-day to ye, ma'am!"

Aunt Euphemia did not seem even to see him. She was also afflicted with sudden deafness.

"Louise! I shall never forget this—never!" she declared haughtily, as Willy Peebles started the car and it rumbled on down the Shell Road.

Unable to face Cap'n Amazon just then for several reasons, Louise did not re-enter the store but strolled down to the sands. There was a skiff drawn up above high-water mark and the hoop-backed figure of Washy Gallup sat in it. He was mending a net. He nodded with friendliness to Louise, his jaw working from side to side like a cow chewing her cud—and for the same reason. Washy had no upper teeth left.

"How be you this fine day, miss?" the old fellow asked sociably. "It's enough to put new marrer in old bones, this weather. Cold weather lays me up same's any old hulk. An' I been used to work, I have, all my life. Warn't none of 'em any better'n me in my day."

"You have done your share, I am sure, Mr. Gallup," the girl said, smiling cheerfully down upon him. "Yours is the time for rest."

"Rest? How you talk!" exclaimed Washy. "A man ought to be able to airn his own pollock and potaters, or else he might's well give up the ship. I tell 'em if I was only back in my young

days where I could do a full day's work, I'd be satisfied."

Louise had turned up a fiddler with the toe of her boot. As the creature scurried for sanctuary, Washy observed:

"Them's curious critters. All crabs is."

"I think they are curious," Louise agreed. "Like a cross-eyed man. Look one way and run another."

"Surely—surely. Talk about a curiosity—the curiousest-osity I ever see was a crab they have in Japanese waters; big around's a clam-bucket and danglin', gre't long laigs to it like a sea-going giraffe."

Louise was thankful for this opportunity for laughter, for that "curiousest-osity" was too much for her sense of the ludicrous.

Like almost every other man of any age that Louise had met about Cardhaven—save Cap'n Abe himself—Washy had spent a good share of his life in deep-bottomed craft. But he had never risen higher than petty officer.

"Some men's born to serve afore the mast—or how'd we git sailors?" observed the old fellow, with all the philosophy of the unambitious man. "Others get into the afterguard with one, two, three, and a jump!" His trembling fingers knotted the twine dexterously. "Now, there's your uncle."

"Uncle Amazon?" asked Louise.

"No, miss. Cap'n Abe, I mean. This here Am'zon Silt, 'tis plain to be seen, has got more salt water than blood in *his* veins. Cap'n Abe's a nice feller—not much again him here where he's lived and kep' store for twenty-odd year. 'Ceptin' his yarnin' 'bout his brother all the time. But from the look of Cap'n Am'zon I wouldn't put past him anything that Cap'n Abe says he's done—and more.

"But Abe himself, now, I'd never believed would trust himself on open water."

"Yet," cried Louise, "he's shipped on a sailing vessel, Uncle Amazon says. He's gone for a voyage."

"Ye-as. But *has* he?" Washy retorted, his head on one side and his rheumy old eyes looking up at her as sly as a ferret's.

"What do you mean?"

"We none of us—none of the neighbors, I mean —seen him go. As fur's we know he didn't go away at all. We're only taking his brother's word for it."

"Why, Mr. Gallup! You're quite as bad as Betty. One would think to hear you and her talk that Cap'n Amazon was a fratricide."

"Huh?"

"That he had murdered his brother," explained the girl.

"That's fratter side, is it? Well, I don't take no stock in such foolishness. Them's Bet Gallup's notions. Cap'n Am'zon's all right, to *my* way o' thinkin'. I was talkin' about Cap'n Abe."

"I do not understand you at all, then," said the puzzled girl.

"I see you don't just foller me," he replied patiently. "I ain't casting no alligators at your Uncle Am'zon. It's Cap'n Abe. I doubt his goin' to sea at all. I bet he never shipped aboard that craft his brother tells about."

"Goodness! Why not?"

"'Cause he ain't a sea-goin' man. There's a few o' such amongst Cape Codders. Us'ally they go away from the sea before they git found out, though."

"'Found out?'" the girl repeated with exasperation. "Found out in *what?*"

"That they're *scare't* o' blue water," Washy said decidedly. "Nobody 'round here ever seen Cap'n Abe outside the Haven. He wouldn't no more come down here, push this skiff afloat, and row out to deep water than he'd go put his hand in a wild tiger's mouth—no, ma'am!"

"Why, isn't that very ridiculous?" Louise said, not at all pleased. "Of course Cap'n Abe shipped on that boat just as Cap'n Amazon said he was going to. Otherwise he would have been back—or we would have heard from him."

"He did, hey?" responded Washy sharply, springing the surprise he had been leading up to. "Then why didn't he take his chist with him? It's come back to the Paulmouth depot, so Perry Baker says, it not being claimed down to Boston."

CHAPTER XIV

A CHOICE OF CHAPERONS

WASHY GALLUP'S gossip should not have made much impression upon Louise Grayling's mind, but it fretted her. Perhaps her recent interview with Aunt Euphemia had rasped the girl's nerves. She left the old fisherman with a tart speech and returned to the store.

There were customers being waited upon, so she had no opportunity to mention the matter of Cap'n Abe's chest to the substitute storekeeper at once. Then, when she had taken time to consider it, she decided not to do so.

It really was no business of hers whether Cap'n Abe had taken his chest with him when he sailed from Boston or not. She had never asked Cap'n Amazon the name of the vessel his brother was supposed to have shipped on. Had she known it was the *Curlew,* the very schooner on which Professor Grayling had sailed, she would, of course, have shown a much deeper interest. And had Cap'n Amazon learned from Louise the name of the craft

hanging lamp, she wondered that (
did not speak of it if he knew his
had been returned to the Paulmouth

Without being in the least grim-
eyes, there was an expression on C
face, kept scrupulously shaven, that
tate to pry into or show curiosity re
his private affairs.

He might be perfectly willing to te
she wished to know. He was frank
lating his personal experiences up
seas, that was sure!

Cap'n Amazon puffed at his pip
engage the attention of Diddimus. T
shell ran from him no longer; but
fused to be petted. He now lay on
blinked with a bored manner at th

If Louise came near him he purr
ting out a hooked claw to catch her
her, and so get his head rubbed.
Amazon undertook any familiarit

critters get. We had a black man and a black dog with us aboard the fo'master *Sally S. Stern* when I was master, out o' Baltimore for Chilean ports. Bill was the blackest negro, I b'lieve, I ever see. You couldn't see him in the dark with his mouth and eyes both shut. And that Newfoundland of his was just as black and his coat just as kinky as Bill's wool. The crew called 'em the two Snowballs."

"What notion did the dog take, Uncle Amazon?" Louise asked as he halted. Sometimes he required a little urging to "get going." But not much.

"Why, no matter what Bill did around the deck, or below, or overside, or what not, the dog never seemed to pay much attention to him. But the minute Bill started aloft that dog began to cry—whine and bark—and try to climb the shrouds after that nigger. Land sakes, you never in your life saw such actions! Got so we had to chain the dog Snowball whenever it came on to blow, for there's a consarned lot o' reefin' down and hoistin' sail on one o' them big fo'masters. The skipper't keeps his job on a ship like the *Sally S. Stern* must get steamboat speed out o' her.

"So, 'twas 'all hands to stations!' sometimes three and four times in a watch. Owners ain't overlib'ral in matter of crew nowadays. Think because there's a donkey-engine on deck and a

riggin' to hoist your big sails, ye don't re'lly need men for'ard at all.

"That v'y'ge out in pertic'lar I remember that there was two weeks on a stretch that not a soul aboard had more'n an hour's undisturbed sleep. And that dog! Poor brute, I guess he thought Bill was goin' to heaven and leavin' him behind ev'ry time the nigger started for the masthead.

"I most always," continued Cap'n Amazon, "seen to it myself that the dog was chained when Bill was likely to go aloft. I liked that dog. He was a gentleman, if he was black. And Bill was a good seaman, and with a short tongue. The dog was about the only critter aboard he seemed to cotton to. Nothin' was too good for the dog, and the only way I got Bill to sign on was by agreeing to take the Newfoundland along.

"Well, we got around the Horn much as us'al. Windjammers all have their troubles there. And then, not far from the western end o' the Straits we got into a belt of light airs—short, gusty winds that blew every which way. It kept the men in the tops most of the time. Some of 'em vowed they was goin' to swing their hammocks up there.

"Come one o' those days, with the old *Sally* just loafin' along," pursued Cap'n Amazon, sucking hard on his pipe, "when I spied a flicker o' wind comin', and the mate he sent the men gallopin' up

the shrouds. I'd forgot the dog. So had Nigger Bill, I reckon.

"Bill was one o' the best topmen aboard. He was up there at work before the dog woke up and started ki-yi-ing. He bayed Bill like a beagle hound at the foot of a coon tree. Then, jumping, he caught the lower shrouds with his forepaws.

"The new slant of the wind struck us at the same moment. The old *Sally S.* heeled to larboard and that Newfoundland was jerked over the rail."

"The poor thing!" Louise cried.

"You'd ha' thought so. I wouldn't have felt no worse if one of the men had gone over. Owner's business, or not, I sung out to the second to get his boat out and I kicked off my shoes, grabbed a life-ring, and jumped myself."

"You! Uncle Amazon?" gasped his niece.

"Yep. The mate had the deck and I was the only man free. There wasn't much of a sea runnin', anyway. No pertic'lar danger. That is, not commonly.

"But the minute I come up to the surface and rose breast-high, dashin' the water out o' my eyes so's to look around for the dog, I seen I'd been a leetle mite too previous, as the feller said. I hadn't taken into consideration one pertic'lar chance —like the feller't married one o' twins an' then couldn't tell which from t'other.

"I see Snowball the dog, all right; but headin' for him like a streak o' greased lightin' was the triandicular fin of a shark. I'd forgot all about those fellers; and we hadn't see one for weeks, anyway. In warmer waters than them the *Sally S. Stern* was then in, the sharks will come right up and stand with their noses out o' the sea begging like a dog for scraps. They'd bark if they knew how, by gravy!

"Well," went on Cap't Amazon while Louise listened spellbound, "that dog Snowball was in a bad fix. A dog's a dog—almost human as you might say. But I wasn't aimin' puttin' myself in a shark's mouth for a whole kennel full o' dogs.

"Mind you, not minutes but only seconds had passed since the dog shot outboard. The ship was not movin' fast. She heeled over again and her spars and flappin' canvas was almost over my head as I glanced up.

"And then I seen a sight—I did, for a fact. I cal'late you never give a thought to how high the teetering top of a mast on such a vessel as the *Sally S. Stern* is, from the ocean level. Never did, eh?

"Well," as the enthralled Louise shook her head, "they're taller than a lot of these tall buildings you see in the city. 'Skyscrapers' they call 'em. That's what the old *Sally's* topmasts looked like gazin' up at 'em out of the sea. They looked

like they brushed the wind-driven clouds chasin' overhead.

"And out o' that web of riggin' and small spars, and slattin' canvas, and other gear, I seen a man's body hurled into the air. It was Snowball, the man. Bill his right name was.

"Flung himself, he did, clean out o' the ship and as she heeled back to starboard he shot down, feet first, straight as a die, and made a hole in the sea not ha'f a cable's length from me and nearer the dog than I was. And as he came down I seen his open knife flashing in his hand.

"Yes, my dear, that was a mem'rable leap. Talk about these fellers jumpin' off that there Brooklyn Bridge! 'Tain't much higher.

"The mate brought the *Sally S. Stern* up into the wind, the second's crew got the boat over, and they picked me up in a jiffy. Then I stood up and yelled for 'em to pull on, for I could see the man, the dog, and the shark almost in a bunch together.

"But," concluded Cap'n Amazon, "a nigger ain't often much afraid of a shark. When we got to 'em there was a patch of bloody water and foam; but it wasn't the blood of neither of the Snowballs that was spilled. They come out of it without a scratch."

"Oh, Cap'n Amazon, what a really wonderful life you have led!" Louise said earnestly.

Cap'n Amazon's eye brightened, and he looked

vastly pleased. Whenever he made a serious impression with one of his tales of personal achievement or peril, he was as frankly delighted as a child.

"Yes, ain't I?" he observed. "I don't for the life of me see how Abe's stood it ashore all these years. An' him keepin' a shop!" and he sniffed scornfully.

Before Louise could make rejoinder, or bolster up the reputation of the absent Cap'n Abe in any way, the noise of an automobile stopping before the store was audible.

"Now, if that's one o' them summer fellers for gas I shall raise the price of it—I vow!" ejaculated Cap'n Amazon, but getting up briskly and laying aside his pipe and knitting.

The summons did not come on the store door. Somebody opened the gate, came to the side door and rapped. Cap'n Amazon shuffled into the hall and held parley with the caller.

"Why, come right in! Sure she's here—an' we're both sittin' up for comp'ny," Louise heard the captain say heartily.

He ushered in Lawford Tapp. Not the usual Lawford, in rough fisherman's clothing or boating flannels—or even in the chauffeur's uniform Louise supposed he sometimes wore. But in the neat, well-fitting clothing of what the habit-advertising pages of the magazines term the "up-to

date young man." His sartorial appearance outclassed that of any longshoreman she had ever imagined.

Louise gave him her hand with just a little apprehension. She realized that for a young man to make an evening call upon a girl in a simple community such as Cardhaven might cause comment which she did not care to arouse. But it seemed Lawford Tapp had an errand.

"I do not know, Miss Grayling, whether you care to go out in my *Merry Andrew* now that your friends have arrived," he said. "But if you do, we might go on Thursday."

"Day after to-morrow? Why not?" she replied with alacrity. "Of course I shall be glad to go—as I already assured you. My—er—friends' coming makes no difference." She thought he referred to Aunt Euphemia and the Perritons. "They will not take up so much of my time that I shall have to desert all my other acquaintances."

Lawford cheered up immensely at this statement. Cap'n Amazon had gone into the store at once and now returned with his box of "private stock two-fors," one of which choice cigars each of the men took.

"Light up! Light up!" he said cordially. "My niece don't mind the smell of tobacker." Cap'n Amazon was much more friendly with Lawford than Louise might have expected him to be. But,

of course, hospitality was a form of religion with the Silt brothers. They could neither of them have treated a guest shabbily.

Indeed, under the influence of the cigar and the presence of another listener, the captain expanded. With little urging he related incident after incident of his varied career—stories of stern trial, of dangerous adventure, of grim fights with the ravening sea; peril by shipwreck, by fire, by savages; encounters with whales and sharks, with Malay pirates; voyaging with a hold full of opium-crazed coolie laborers, and of actual mutiny on the hermaphrodite brig, *Galatea,* when Cap'n Amazon alone of all the afterguard was left alive to fight the treacherous crew and navigate the ship.

Those two hours were memorable—and would remain so in Louise's mind for weeks. Lawford Tapp, too, quite gave himself up to the charm of the old romancer. To watch Cap'n Amazon's dark intent face and his glowing eyes, while he told of these wonders of sea and land, would have thrilled the most sophisticated listener.

"Isn't he a wonder?" murmured Lawford, as Louise accompanied him to the gate and watched him start the automobile engine. "I never heard such a fellow in my life. And good as gold!"

Louise had made up her mind to be distinctly casual with the young man hereafter; but his hearty praise of her uncle warmed her manner toward

him. Besides, she had to confess in secret that Lawford was most likable.

She mentioned her aunt's arrival in the neighborhood and he asked, laughing:

"Oh, then shall we have her for our chaperon?"

"Aunt Euphemia? Mercy, no! I have chosen Betty Gallup and believe me, Mr. Tapp, Betty is much to be preferred."

It was odd that Louise had not yet discovered who and what Lawford Tapp was. Yet the girl had talked with few of the neighbors likely to discuss the affairs of the summer residents along The Beaches. And, of course, she asked Cap'n Amazon no questions, for he was not likely to possess the information.

After she had bidden her uncle good-night and retired, thoughts of Lawford Tapp kept her mind alert. She could not settle herself to sleep. With the lamp burning brightly on the stand at the bedside and herself propped with pillows, she opened the old scrapbook found in the storeroom chest and fluttered its pages.

Almost immediately she came upon a story related in the Newport *Mercury*. It was the supposedly veracious tale of an ancient sea captain who had been a whaler in the old days.

There, almost word for word, was printed the story Cap'n Amazon had told her that evening about the black man and the black dog!

CHAPTER XV

THE UNEXPECTED

THE finding of one of Cap'n Amazon's amazing narratives of personal prowess in the old scrapbook shocked Louise Grayling. The mystery of the thing made alert her brain and awoke in the girl vague suspicions that troubled her for hours. Indeed, it was long that night before she could get to sleep.

During these days of acquaintanceship and familiarity with the old sea captain she had learned to love him so well for his good qualities that it was easy for her to forgive his faults. If he "drew the long bow" in relating his adventures, his niece was prepared to excuse the failing.

There was, too, an explanation of this matter, and one not at all improbable. The reporter of the *Mercury* claimed to have taken down the story of the black man who had fought a shark for the life of his dog just as it fell from the lips of an ancient mariner. This mariner might have been Cap'n Amazon Silt himself. Why not? The captain might have been more modest in relating his

personal connection with the incident when talking with the reporter than he had been in relating the story to his niece.

Still, even with this suggested explanation welcomed to her mind, Louise Grayling was puzzled. She went through the entire scrapbook, skimming the stories there related, to learn if any were familiar. But no. She found nothing to suggest any of the other tales Cap'n Amazon had related in her hearing. And it was positive that her uncle had not read this particular story of the black man and the black dog since coming to the store on the Shell Road, for Louise had had possession of the book.

Therefore she was quite as mystified when she fell asleep at dawn as she had been when first her discovery was made. She was half determined to probe for an explanation of the coincidence when she came downstairs to a late breakfast. But no good opportunity presented itself for the broaching of any such inquiry.

She wished to make preparations for the fishing party in the *Merry Andrew,* and that kept her in the kitchen part of the day. She baked a cake and made filling for sandwiches.

Betty Gallup accepted the invitation to accompany Louise on the sloop without hesitation. She approved of Lawford Tapp. Yet she dropped nothing in speaking of the young man to open Louise's

eyes to the fact that he was the son of a multi-millionaire.

The activities of the moving picture company increased on this day; but it was not until the following morning, when Louise went shoreward with the tackle and the smaller lunch basket, that she again saw Mr. Judson Bane to speak to. As she sat upon the thwart of the old skiff where Washy Gallup had mended his net, the handsome leading man of the picture company strolled by.

Bane certainly made a picturesque fisherman, whether he looked much like the native breed or not. An open-air studio had been arranged on the beach below the Bozewell bungalow, and Louise could see a director trying to give a number of actors his idea of what a group of fishermen mending their nets should look like.

"He should engage old Washy Gallup to give color to the group," Louise said to Bane, laughing.

"Anscomb is having his own troubles with that bunch," sighed the leading man. "Some of them never saw a bigger net before than one to catch minnows. Do you sail in this sloop I see coming across from the millionaire's villa, Miss Grayling?"

"Yes," Louise replied. "Mr. Tapp is kind enough to take us fishing."

"You are, then, one of these fortunate creatures," and Bane's sweeping gesture indicated that he referred to the occupants of the cottages set

along the bluff above The Beaches, "who toil not, neither do they spin. I fancied you might be one of us. Rather, I've heard that down here."

"That surmise gained coinage when I first arrived at Cardhaven," Louise said, dimpling. "I did nothing to discourage the mistake, and I presume Gusty Durgin still believes I pose before the camera."

"Gusty has aspirations that way herself," chuckled Bane. "She is a character."

"I wonder what kind of screen actresss I would make?"

He smiled down at her rather grimly. "The kind the directors call the appealing type, I fancy, Miss Grayling. Though I have no doubt you would do much better than most. Making big eyes at a camera is the limit of art achieved by many of our feminine screen stars. I do not expect to put in a very pleasant summer amid my present surroundings."

"Oh, then you are here for more than one picture."

"Several, if the weather proves propitious. I shall play the fisherman hero, or the villain, until my manager has my new play ready in the fall. Believe me, Miss Grayling, I am not in love with this picture drama. But when one is offered for his resting season half as much again as he can possibly earn during the run of a legitimate Broad-

way production he must not be blamed for accepting the contract. We all bow to the power of gold."

Louise, whose gaze was fixed upon the approaching sloop, smiled. She was thinking: "All but Lawford Tapp, the philosophic fisherman!"

"I believe," Bane said, with flattery, "that I should delight to play opposite to you, Miss Grayling, rank amateur though you would be. This Anscomb really is a wonderful director and gets surprising results from material that cannot compare with you. I'll speak to him if you say the word. He'd oblige me, I am sure. One of the scripts he has told me about has a part fitted to you."

"Oh, Mr. Bane!" she cried. "I'd have to think about that, I fear. And such a tempting offer! Now, if you said that to Gusty Durgin——"

At the moment Betty Gallup came into view. Masculine in appearance at any time in her man's hat and coat, she was doubly so now. She frankly wore overalls, but had drawn a short skirt over them; and she wore gum boots. Bane stared at this apparition and gasped:

"Is—is it a man—or what?"

"Why, Mr. Bane! That is my chaperon."

"Chaperon! Ye gods and little fishes! Miss Grayling, no matter where you go, or with whom, you are perfectly safe with *that* as a chaperon."

"How ridiculous, Mr. Bane!" the girl cried, laughing. Betty strode through the sand to the spot where they stood. "This is Mr. Bane, Betty," Louise continued, "Mrs. Gallup, Mr. Bane."

The actor swept off his sou'wester with a flourish. Betty eyed him with disfavor.

"So you're one o' them play-actors, be you? Land sakes! And tryin' to look like a fisherman, too! I don't s'pose you know a grommet from the bight of a hawser."

"Guilty as charged," Bane admitted with a chuckle. "But we all must live, Mrs. Gallup."

"Humph!" grunted the old woman. "Are you sure that's so in ev'ry case? There's more useless folks on the Cape now than the Recordin' Angel can well take care on."

"Oh, Betty!" Louise gasped.

But Bane was highly amused. "I'm not at all sure you're not right, Mrs. Gallup. I sometimes feel that if I were a farmer and raised onions, or a fisherman and caught the denizens of the sea, I might feel a deeper respect for myself. As it is, when I work I am only *playing*."

"Humph!" exploded Betty again. "'Denizens of the sea,' eh? New one on me. I ain't never heard of *them* fish afore."

The sail of the sloop slatted and then came down with the rattle of new canvas. Having let go the

sheet, Lawford ran forward and pitched the anchor over. Then he drew in the skiff that trailed the *Merry Andrew,* stepped in, and sculled himself ashore, beaching the boat just as Cap'n Amazon came down from the store with a second basket of supplies.

"Wish I was goin' with ye," he said heartily. "Would, too, if I could shut up shop. But I promised Abe I'd stay by the ship till he come home again."

Louise introduced her uncle to Mr. Bane; but during the bustle of getting into the skiff and pushing off she overlooked the fact that Lawford and the actor were not introduced.

"Bring us home a mess of tautog," Cap'n Amazon shouted. "I sartainly do fancy blackfish when they're cooked right. Bile 'em, an' serve with an egg sauce, is my way o' puttin' 'em on the table."

"That was Cap'n Abe's way, too," muttered Betty.

The cloud on Lawford Tapp's countenance did not lift immediately as he sculled them out to the anchored sloop. Louise saw quickly that his ill humor was for Bane.

"I must keep this young man at a distance," she thought, as she waved her hand to Uncle Amazon and Mr. Bane. "He takes too much for granted, I fear. Perhaps, after all, I should have excused myself from this adventure."

She eyed Lawford covertly as, with swelling muscles and lithe, swinging body, he drove his sculling oar. "But he does look more 'to the manner born'—much more the man, in fact—than that actor!"

Lawford could not for long forget his duty as host, and he was as cheerful and obliging as usual by the time the three had scrambled aboard the *Merry Andrew.*

Immediately Betty Gallup cast aside her skirt and stood forth untrammeled in the overalls. "Gimme my way and I'd wear 'em doin' housework and makin' my garding," she declared. "Land sakes! I allus did despise women's fooleries."

Louise laughed blithely.

"Why, Betty," she said, "lots of city women who do their own housework don 'knickers' or gymnasium suits to work in. No excuse is needed."

"Humph!" commented the old woman. "I had no idee city women had so much sense. The ones I see down here on the Cape don't show it."

The morning breeze was light but steady. The *Merry Andrew* was a sweetly sailing boat and Lawford handled her to the open admiration of Betty Gallup. The old woman's comment would have put suspicion in Louise's mind had the girl not been utterly blind to the actual identity of the sloop's owner.

"Humph! you're the only furiner, Lawford

Tapp, I ever see who could sail a smack proper. But you got Cape blood in you—that's what 'tis."

"Thank you, Betty," he returned, with the ready smile that crinkled the corners of his eyes. "That is a compliment indeed."

The surf only moaned to-day over Gull Rocks, for there was little ground swell. The waves heaved in, with an oily, leisurely motion and, it being full sea, merely broke with a streak of foam marking the ugly reef below.

A little to the seaward side of the apex of the reef Betty, at a word from Lawford, cast loose the sheet and then dropped the anchor.

"Mussel beds all about here," explained the young man to his guest. "That means good feeding for the blackfish. Can't catch them anywhere save on a rock bottom, or around old spiles or sunken wrecks. Better let me rig your line, Miss Grayling. You'll need a heavier sinker than that for outside here—ten ounces at least. You see, the tug of the undertow is considerable."

Betty Gallup, looking every whit the "able seaman" now, rigged her own line quickly and opened the bait can.

"Land sakes!" she exclaimed. "Where'd you get scallop bait this time o' year, Lawford? You must be a houn' dog for smellin' 'em out."

"I am," he laughed. "I know that tautog will leave mussels for scallop any time. And we'll have

the eyes of the scallops fried for lunch. They're all ready in the cabin."

The pulpy, fat bodies of the scallop—a commercial waste—were difficult to hang upon the short, blunt hooks; but Lawford seemed to have just the knack of it. He showed Louise how to lower the line to the proper depth, advising:

"Remember, you'll only feel a nibble. The tautog is a shy fish. He doesn't swallow hook, line, and sinker like a hungry cod. You must snap him quick when he takes the hook, for his mouth is small and you must get him instantly—or not at all."

Louise found this to be true. Her hooks were "skinned clean" several times before she managed to get inboard her first fish.

She learned, too, why the tackle for tautog has to be so strong. Once hooked, the fish darts straight down under rocks or into crevasses, and sulks there. He comes out of that ambush like a chunk of lead.

The party secured a number of these dainty fish; but to lend variety to the day's haul they got the anchor up after luncheon and ran down to the channels there to chum for snappers. Lawford had brought along rods; for to catch the young and gamey bluefish one must use an entirely different rigging from that used for tautog.

Louise admired the rod Lawford himself used.

She knew something about fancy tackle, and this outfit of the young man, she knew, never cost a penny less than a hundred dollars.

"And this sloop, which is his property," she thought, "is another expensive possession. I can see where his money goes—when he has any to spend. He is absolutely improvident. Too bad."

She had to keep reminding herself, it seemed, of Lawford Tapp's most glaring faults. Improvidence and a hopeless leaning toward extravagance were certainly unforgivable blemishes in the character of a young man in the position she believed Lawford held.

The sport of chumming for snappers, even if they hooked more of sluggish fluke than of the gamier fish to tempt which the chopped bait is devoted, was so exciting that Betty, sailing the sloop, overlooked a pregnant cloud that streaked up from the horizon almost like a puff of cannon smoke.

The squall was upon them so suddenly that Louise could not wind in her line in good season. Lawford was quicker; but in getting his tackle inboard he was slow to obey Betty's command:

"Let go that sheet! Want to swamp us, foolin' with that fancy fish rod?"

"Aye, aye, skipper!" he sang out, laughing, and jumped to cast off the line in question just as the sail bulged taut as a drumhead with the striking squall.

There was a "lubber's loop" in the bight of the sheet and as the young man loosed it his arm was caught in this trap. The boom swung viciously outboard and Lawford went with it. He was snatched like some inanimate object over the sloop's rail and, the next instant, plunged beneath the surface of the suddenly foam-streaked sea.

CHAPTER XVI

A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS

LAWFORD came up as the sloop swept by on her new tack, his smile as broad as ever. He blew loudly and then shouted:

"Going—too—fast—for—me! Whoa! Back up a little, ladies, and let me climb aboard."

"Well, of all the crazy critters!" the "able seaman" declared. "Stand by with that boathook, Miss Lou, and see if you can harpoon him."

Louise swallowed the lump in her throat and tried to laugh too. To tell the truth, the accident to Lawford Tapp had frightened her dreadfully at the moment it occurred.

Betty Gallup put over the wheel and the *Merry Andrew,* still under propulsion of the bursting squall, flew about, almost on her heel. Louise, who was shielding her eyes from the flying spray under the sharp of her hand and watching the head and shoulders of Lawford as he plowed through the jumping waves with a great overhand stroke, suddenly shrieked aloud:

"Oh, Betty!"

"What's the matter? Land sakes!"

Both saw the peril threatening the swimmer. The light skiff at the end of the long painter whipped around when the line tautened. As Betty cried out in echo to Louise's wail, the gunnel of the skiff crashed down upon Lawford's head and shoulders.

"Oh! Oh! He's hurt!" cried Louise.

"He's drowned—dead!" ejaculated Betty Gallup. "Here, Miss Lou, you take the wheel——"

But the girl had no intention of letting the old woman go overboard. Betty in her heavy boots would be wellnigh helpless in the choppy sea. If it were possible to rescue Lawford Tapp she would do it herself.

The human mind is a wonderfully constituted—mechanism, may we call it? It receives and registers impressions that are seemingly incoördinate; then of a sudden each cog slips into place and the perfection of a belief, of an opinion, of a desire, even of a most momentous discovery, is attained.

Thus instantly Louise Grayling had a startling revelation. "Handle the boat yourself, Betty!" she commanded. *"I am going to get him."*

Her skirt was dropped, even as she spoke. She wore "sneaks" to-day instead of high boots, and she kicked them off without unlacing them. Then, poising on the rail for a moment, she dived overboard on a long slant.

She swam under the surface for some fathoms

and coming up dashed the water from her eyes to stare about.

The black squall had passed. The sea dimpled in blue and green streaks as before. A few white-caps only danced about the girl. Where Lawford had gone down——

A round, sleek object—like the head of a seal—bobbed in the agitated water. It was not ten yards away. Had she not been so near she must have overlooked it. He might have sunk again, going down forever, for it was plain the blow he had suffered had deprived Lawford of consciousness.

Louise wasted no breath in shouting, nor moments in looking back at Betty and the sloop. All her life she had been confident in the water. She had learned to ride a surfboard with her father like the natives in Hawaii. A comparatively quiet sea like this held no terrors for Louise Grayling.

She dived in a long curve like a jumping porpoise, and went down after the sinking man. In thirty seconds she had him by the hair, and then beat her way to the surface with her burden.

Lawford's face was dead white; his eyes open and staring. There was a cut upon the side of his head from which blood and water dribbled upon her shoulder as she held him high out of the sea.

There sounded the clash of oars in her ears. How Betty had lowered the jib, thrown over the

anchor, and manned the skiff so quickly would always be a mystery to Louise. But the "able seaman" knew this coast as well, at least, as Lawford Tapp. They were just over a shoal, and there was safe anchorage for a small craft.

"Give him to me. Land sakes!" gasped Betty over her head. "I never see no city gal like you, Miss Lou."

Nor had Louise ever seen a woman with so much muscular strength and the knowledge of how to apply it as Betty displayed. She lifted Lawford out of the girl's arms and into the skiff with the dexterity of one trained in hauling in halibut, for Betty had spent her younger years on the Banks with her father.

Louise scrambled into the skiff without assistance. Betty was already at the oars and Louise took the injured head of the man in her lap. He began to struggle back to life again.

"I—I'm all right," he muttered. "Sorry—made such a—a fool—of—myself."

"Hush up, *you!*" snapped Betty. "I'd ought to have seed to this skiff. Then you wouldn't have got battered like you did." A tear ran frankly down Betty's nose and dripped off its end. "If anything really bad had happened to you, Lawford, I'd a-never forgive myself. I thought you was a goner for sure."

"Thanks to you, I'm not, I guess, Betty," he

said more cheerfully. He did not know who had jumped overboard to his rescue.

For some reason the girl was suddenly embarrassed by this fact.

The skiff reached the plunging sloop and Louise got inboard and aided Betty to get Lawford over the rail. Then she slipped on her skirt.

Lawford slumped down in the cockpit, saying he was all right but looking all wrong.

"Going to get him back to Tapp Point just as quick as I can," declared the "able seaman" to Louise. "Doctor ought to see that cut."

"Oh, Betty!"

"Now, now, Miss Lou," murmured the old woman with the light of sudden comprehension in her eyes. "Don't take on now! You've been a brave gal so fur."

"And I will keep my courage," Louise said with tremulous smile.

"Go right over there an' hold his head, Miss Lou. Pet him up a leetle bit; 'twon't hurt a mite."

The vivid blush that dyed the girl's cheeks signaled the fact that Betty had guessed more of the truth than Louise cared to have her or anybody know. She shook her head negatively to the keen-eyed old woman; nevertheless she went forward, found one of Lawford's handkerchiefs and bound up his head. The cut did not seem very deep; yet

the shock of the blow he had suffered certainly had dulled the young man's comprehension.

"Thank you—thank you," he muttered and laid his head down on his arms again.

Betty rounded the end of the Neck where the lighthouse stood. One of the lightkeepers was on the gallery just under the lamp chamber and had been watching them through his glasses. He waved a congratulatory hand as the *Merry Andrew* shot along, under the "able seaman's" skillful guidance.

"I'm goin' to put you ashore in the skiff right there by the store, Miss Lou," Betty said.

"Shouldn't I get a doctor and send him over to the Point?"

"They've got a telephone there," Betty told her.

"I—I hope they'll take good care of him."

"They ought to," sniffed Betty. "I'll see to it he's all right, Miss Lou, before I leave him."

"Thank you, Betty," returned the girl, too honest to make any further attempt to deny her deep interest in the man.

When the sail rattled down and Louise tossed over the anchor, Lawford roused a bit. "Sorry the trip turned out so rotten bad, Miss Grayling," he mumbled. "I—I don't feel just right yet."

Louise patted his shoulder. "You poor boy!" she said tenderly. "Don't mind about me. It's *you* we are worrying about. But I am sure you cannot be seriously injured. Betty will take you

directly over to the Point and the folks there will get a doctor for you. Next time we'll have a much nicer fishing trip, Mr. Tapp. Good-bye."

He muttered his adieu and watched her get into the skiff after Betty and the baskets. The "able seaman" rowed quickly to the beach. The sharp eyes of Mr. Bane noted their arrival, and he strode over to the spot where the skiff came in, to help Louise out of the boat and bring the baskets ashore.

"You need a handy man, I see," the actor observed. "What a fine catch you have had—blackfish, snappers, and fluke, eh? I'll carry the baskets up to your uncle's store for you. Fine old man, your uncle, Miss Grayling. And what stories he can tell of his adventures—my word!"

"Come over to-night and tell me how he is, Betty, won't you?" the girl whispered to the "able seaman" and the latter, nodding her comprehension, pulled back to the sloop. Neither of them saw that Lawford was watching the little group on shore and that when Bane and the girl turned toward the store the young man looked after them with gloomy visage.

The girl's replies to Bane's observation were most inconsequential. Her mind was upon Lawford and his condition. She was personally uncomfortable, too; for although the sun and wind had dried her hair and her blouse, beneath the dry skirt her clothing was wet.

As they came to the Shell Road the long, gray roadster Louise had seen before came down from town. L'Enfant Terrible was at the wheel while her two older sisters sat in the narrow seat behind. Cecile tossed a saucy word over her shoulder, indicating Louise and Bane, and her older sisters smiled superciliously upon the two pedestrians. Louise was too deeply occupied with thoughts of the injured man to note this by-play.

"Oh, fudge!" responded L'Enfant Terrible, not deeply impressed by these sisterly admonitions.

Marian was twenty-six—two years Lawford's senior. She was a heavy, lymphatic girl, fast becoming as matronly of figure as her mother. She still bolstered up her belief that she had matri-

monial prospects; but the men who wanted to marry her she would not have while those she desired to marry would not have her. Marian Tapp was becoming bored.

Prue was a pretty girl. She was but nineteen. However, she had likewise assumed a bored air after being in society a single season.

"That big actor man will put poor Fordy's nose out of joint with the film lady," Prue said. "Look out for that dog, Cis. It's the Perritons'. If you run over him——"

"Nasty little thing!" grumbled Cecile.

"And the apple of Sue Perriton's eye," drawled Marian. "Be careful what you are about, Cecile. It all lies with the Perritons whether we get into society this season or not."

"And that Mrs. Conroth who is with them," put in Prue. "*She* is the real thing—the link between the best of New York and Albany society. Old family—away back to the patroons—so old she has to keep moth balls hung in her family tree. My! if mother could once become the familiar friend of miladi Conroth——"

"No such luck," groaned Marian. "After all's said and done, mother can't forget the candy kitchen. She always looks to me, poor dear, as though she had just been surreptitiously licking her fingers."

"We *do* have the worst luck!" groaned the sec-

ond sister. "There's that Dot Johnson coming. Mother says daddy insists, and when I. Tapp does put down his foot—— Well!"

"We'll put her off on Fordy," suggested the brighter-witted Cecile. "She rather fancies Ford, I think."

"Dot Johnson!" chorused the older girls, in horror. "Not really?" Marian continued. "The Johnsons are impossible."

"They've got more money than daddy has," said Prue.

"But they have no aspirations—none at all," murmured Marian, in horror. "If Lawford married Dot Johnson it would be almost as bad as his being mixed up with that picture actress."

"For him; not for us," said Prue promptly. "Of course, as far as the Johnsons go, they are too respectable for anything. Poor Fordy!"

"Goodness!" snapped Cecile. "It's not all settled. The banns aren't up."

The girls wheeled into the grounds surrounding the Tapp villa just as Betty Gallup guided the *Merry Andrew* to the dock and leaped ashore with the mooring rope.

Tapp Point consisted of about five acres of bluff and sand. At great expense the Taffy King had terraced the bluff and had made to grow several blades of grass where none at all had been able to gain root before.

The girls saw the queer-looking Betty Gallup helping their brother out of the sloop.

"Say! something's happened to Ford, I guess," Cecile cried, stopping the car short of the porte-cochère.

"Run down and see," commanded Marian languidly.

But Prue hopped out of the roadster and started down the path immediately. She and Lawford still had a few things in common. Mutual affection was one of them.

"What's happened to him?" she cried. "You're Mrs. Gallup, aren't you?"

"I'm Bet Gallup—yes. You run call up Doc Ambrose from over to Paulmouth. Your brother's got a bad knock on the head."

"And he's been overboard!" gasped Prue.

"I—I'm all right," stammered Lawford. "Let me lie down for a little while. Don't need a doctor."

"You're as wet as a drowned rat," his sister said. "Come on up and get some dry clothes, Ford. I'm sure you're awful kind, Mrs. Gallup. I will telephone for the doctor at once."

"You bet she's kind! Good old soul!" murmured Lawford. "I'd have been six fathoms deep if it hadn't been for Betty."

"She hauled you into the boat, did she?" Prue said in a sympathetic tone. "Well, we won't forget *that*."

Betty had stepped aboard the sloop again to reef down and make all taut. Her sailor-soul would not allow her to leave the lapstreak in a frowsy condition.

Meanwhile Cecile came flying down from the garage, and between his two sisters Lawford was aided up to the house. Despite the young man's protests, Dr. Ambrose was called and he rattled over in what the jolly medical man termed his "one-horse shay." That rattletrap of a second-hand car was known in every town and hamlet for miles around. Sometimes he got stalled, for the engine of the car was one of the crankiest ever built, and the good physician had to get out and proceed on foot. When this happened the man who owned a horse living nearest to the unredeemed automobile always hitched up and dragged the car home. For Dr. Ambrose was beloved as few men save a physician is ever loved in a country community.

"You got a hard crack and no mistake, young man," the physician said, plastering his patient's head in a workmanlike manner. "But you've a good, solid cranium as I've often told you. Not much to get hurt above the ears—mostly bone all the way through. Not easy to crack, like some of these eggshell heads."

Lawford felt the effects of the blow, however, for the rest of the evening. His father was away and so he had no support against the organized

attack of the women of the family. Although it is doubtful if I. Tapp would have sided with his son.

"It really serves you right, Ford, for taking that movie actress sailing," drawled Marian.

"It is a judgment upon him," sighed their mother, wiping her eyes. "Oh, Ford, if you only would settle down and not be so wild!"

"'Wild!' Oh, bluey!" murmured L'Enfant Terrible, who considered her brother a good deal of a tame cat.

"At least," Marian pursued, "you might carry on your flirtation in a less public manner."

"'Flirtation!'" ejaculated Lawford, with a spark of anger—and then settled back on the couch with a groan.

"My goodness me, Ford!" gasped Prue. "You're surely not in earnest?"

"I should hope *not*," drawled Marian.

"Oh, Ford, my boy——"

"Now, mother, don't turn on the sprinkler again," advised L'Enfant Terrible. "It will do you no good. And, anyway, I guess Ford hasn't any too bright a chance with the Grayling. You ought to have seen that handsome Judson Bane lean over her when they were walking up to Cap'n Abe's. I thought he was going to nibble her ear!"

"Cecile!"

"Horrid thing!" Prue exclaimed. "I don't know where she gets such rude manners."

"That boarding school last winter completely spoiled her," complained the mother. "And I sent her to it because Sue Perriton and Alice Bozewell go there."

"And I had a fine chance to get chummy with *them!*" snapped Cecile. "They were both seniors."

"But really," Marian went on, "your entanglement with that movie actress is sure to make trouble for us, Ford. You might be a little more considerate. Just as we are getting in with the Perritons. And their guest, Mrs. Conroth, was really very nice to mother this morning on the beach. She has the open sesame to all the society there is on this side of the Atlantic. It's really a wonderful chance for us, Ford."

"And—he's bound—to spoil—it all!" Mrs. Tapp sobbed into an expensive bit of lace.

"You might be a good sport, Fordy, dear," urged Prue.

"Yes, Fordy; don't crab the game," added the vulgar Cecile.

"You know very well," said the elder sister, "how hard we have tried to take our rightful place here at The Beaches. We have the finest home by far; daddy's got the most money of any of them, and let's us spend it, too. And still it's like rolling a barrel up a sand bank. Just a little thing will spoil our whole season here."

"Do, do be sensible, Ford!" begged his mother.

"Sacrifice yourself for the family's good," said Prue.

"Dear Ford," began Mrs. Tapp again, "for my sake—for all our sakes—take thought of what you are doing. This—this actress person cannot be a girl you could introduce to your sisters——"

"No more of that, mother!" exclaimed the young man, patience at last ceasing to be a virtue. "Criticise me if you wish to; but I will hear nothing against Miss Grayling."

"Oh, dear! Now I have offended him again!" sobbed the matron.

"You are too utterly selfish for words!" declared Marian.

"You're a regular *pig!*" added Prue.

"If you get mixed up with an actress, Fordy, I'll have a fine time when *I* come out, won't I?" complained Cecile.

"Cæsar's ghost!" burst from the lips of the badgered young man. "I wish Betty Gallup had let me drown instead of hauling me inboard this afternoon!"

CHAPTER XVIII

SOMETHING BREAKS

An express wagon, between the shafts of which was a raw-boned gray horse leaning against one shaft as a prop while he dozed, stood before Cap'n Abe's store as Louise and Mr. Judson Bane came up from the shore front. She thanked the actor as he set the heavy baskets on the porch step.

"Those blackfish look so good I long for a fish supper," he said, smiling in open admiration upon her.

Louise was quick to establish a reputation for hospitality. Perhaps it was the Silt blood that influenced her to say: "Wait till I speak to Uncle Amazon, Mr. Bane."

There was a tall gaunt man in overalls and jumper, who, somehow, possessed a family resemblance to the gray horse, leaning against the door frame, much as his beast leaned against the wagon shaft. Perry Baker and the gray horse had traveled so many years together about Paulmouth and Cardhaven that it was not surprising they looked alike.

When Louise mounted the porch steps she could not easily pass the expressman, who was saying, in drawling tones:

"Well, I brought it over, seeing I had a light load. I didn't know what else to do with it. Of course, it was Cap'n Abe give it to me to ship. Let's see, I didn't happen to see you here that night you came, an' I brought the young lady's trunks over, did I?"

"Not as I know on," barked Cap'n Amazon with brevity.

"Funny how we didn't meet then," drawled Perry Baker.

There seemed to be a tenseness to the atmosphere of the old store. Louise saw the usual idlers gathered about the cold stove—Washy Gallup on his nail-keg, his jaw wagging eagerly; Milt Baker and Amiel Perdue side by side with their elbows on the counter; Cap'n Joab Beecher leaning forward on his stick—all watching Cap'n Amazon, it seemed, with strained attention.

It was like a scene set for a play—for the taking of a film, perhaps. The whimsical thought came to Louise that the director had just shouted: "Get set!" and would immediately add: "Action! Camera! Go!"

"Course," Perry Baker drawled, "I sent it to Boston as consigner, myself; so when the chest warn't called for within a reasonable time they

shipped it back to me, knowin' I was agent. Funny Cap'n Abe didn't show up for to claim it."

Cap'n Amazon, grim as a gargoyle, leaned upon the counter and stared the expressman out of countenance, saying nothing. Perry shifted uneasily in the doorway. The captain's silence and his stare were becoming irksome to bear.

"Well!" he finally ejaculated, "that's how 'tis. I'd ha' waited till—till Cap'n Abe come home—if he ever *does* come; but my wife, Huldy, got fidgety. She reads the papers, and she's got it into her head there's something wrong 'bout the old chest. She dreamed 'bout it. An' ye know, when a woman gets to dreamin' she'll drag her anchors, no matter what the bottom is. She says folks have been murdered 'fore now and their bodies crammed into a chest——"

"Why, you long-winded sculpin!" exclaimed Cap'n Amazon, at length goaded to speech. "Bring that chest in and take a reef in your jaw-tackle. I knew a man once't looked nigh enough like you to be your twin; and *he* was purt nigh a plumb idiot, too."

Louise had never before heard her uncle's voice so sharp. It was plain he had not seen his niece until after Perry Baker turned and clumped out upon the porch, thus giving the girl free entrance to the store. She turned, smiling a little whimsically, and said to Bane:

"The moment is not propitious, I fear. Uncle Amazon seems to be put out about something."

"Don't bother him now, I beg," urged the actor, lifting his hat. "I will call later—if I may."

"Certainly, Mr. Bane," she said with seriousness. "Uncle Amazon and I will both be glad to see you."

The expressman came heavily up the steps with a green chest on his shoulder. It had handles of tarred rope and had plainly seen much service; indeed, it was brother to the box in the storeroom which Louise had found filled with nautical literature.

The girl entered the store ahead of the staggering expressman, but stepped aside for him to precede her, for she wished to beckon to Amiel to come out for the baskets of fish.

"Watch out where you're putting your foot, Perry!" Cap'n Joab suddenly exclaimed.

His warning was too late. Some youngster, eager to peel his banana, had flung its treacherous skin upon the floor. The expressman set his clumsy boot upon it.

"Whee! 'Ware below!" yelled Amiel Perdue.

To recover his footing Perry let go of the chest. It fell to the floor with a mighty crash, landing upon one corner and bursting open. During the long years it had stood in Cap'n Abe's storeroom the wood had suffered dry rot.

"Land o' Liberty an' all han's around!" bawled the irrepressible Milt Baker. "There ain't no corpse in *that* chist, for a fac'!"

"What kind of a mess d'ye make that out to be, I want to know?" cackled Washy Gallup.

The hinges had torn away from the rotting wood so that the lid lay wide open. Tumbled out upon the floor were several ancient garments, including a suit of quite unwearable oilskins, and with them at least a wheelbarrow load of bricks!

"Well, I vum!" drawled the expressman, at length recovering speech. "I hope Huldy'll be satisfied."

But Cap'n Joab Beecher was not. He stood up and pointed his stick at the heap of rubbish on the floor and his voice quavered as he shrilly asked:

"Then, *where's Cap'n Abe?*"

They all turned to stare again at Cap'n Amazon. That hardy mariner seemed to be quite as self-possessed as usual. His grim lips opened and in caustic tone he said:

"You fellers seem to think that I'm Abe Silt's keeper. I ain't. Abe's old enough—and ought to be seaman enough—to look out for Abe Silt. What tomfoolery he packed into that chest is none o' my consarn. I l'arnt years ago that Moses an' them old fellers left the chief commandment out o' the Scriptures. That's 'Mind your own business.' Abe's business ain't mine. Here, you Amiel! clear

His voice quavered as he shrilly asked: "Then, *where's Cap'n Abe?*"

up that clutter an' let's have no more words about it."

The decisive speech of the master mariner closed the lips of even Cap'n Joab. The latter did not repeat his query about Cap'n Abe but, with a baffled expression on his weather-beaten countenance, departed with Perry Baker.

That a trap had been set for Cap'n Amazon, that it had been sprung and failed to catch the master mariner, seemed quite plain to Louise. Betty Gallup's oft-expressed suspicions and Washy Gallup's gossip suddenly impressed the girl. With these vague thoughts was connected in her mind the discovery she had made that one of Cap'n Amazon's thrilling stories was pasted into the old scrapbook. Why she should think of that discovery just now mystified her; but it seemed somehow to dovetail into the enigma.

Cap'n Amazon lifted the flap in the counter for Louise and in his usual kindly tone said:

"Good fishin', Niece Louise? Bring home a mess?"

"Yes, indeed," she told him. "The baskets are outside. Let Amiel bring them around to the back."

"Aye, aye!" returned the captain briskly. "Tautog? We'll have 'em for supper," and let her pass as though nothing extraordinary had occurred.

But to Louise's troubled mind the bursting of the old chest was like the explosion of a bomb in Cap'n Abe's store.

What was the meaning of it all? Why had the chest been filled with bricks and useless garments? And by whom?

If by Cap'n Abe, what was his object in doing such a perfectly incomprehensible thing? He had deliberately, it seemed, shipped a quite useless chest to Boston with no expectation of calling for it at the expresss office. Then, *where had he gone?*

Cap'n Joab's query was the one uppermost in Louise Grayling's thought. All these incomprehensible things seemed to lead to that most important question. Had Cap'n Abe gone to sea, or had he not? If not, what had become of him?

And how much more regarding his brother's disappearance did Cap'n Amazon know than the neighbors or herself? In her room Louise sat and faced the problem. She deliberated upon each incident connected with Cap'n Abe's departure as she knew them.

From almost the first moment of her arrival at the store on the Shell Road, the storekeeper had announced the expected arrival of Cap'n Amazon and his own departure for a sea voyage if his brother would undertake the conduct of the store.

The incidents of the night of Cap'n Amazon's coming and of Cap'n Abe's departure seemed rea-

sonable enough. Here had arisen the opportunity long desired by the Shell Road storekeeper. His brother would remain to look out for his business while he could go seafaring. Cap'n Amazon knew just the craft for the storekeeper to sail in, clearing from the port of Boston within a few hours.

There was not much margin of time for Cap'n Abe to make his preparations. Perry Baker was at hand with Louise's trunks, and the storekeeper had sent off his chest, supposedly filled with an outfit for use at sea. Just what he had intended to do with useless clothing and a hod of bricks it was impossible to understand.

Cap'n Abe had come to her bedroom door to bid Louise good-bye, and she had seen him depart in the fog just at dawn. Yet nobody had observed him at the railroad station and he had not called for the chest at the Boston express office.

The chest! That was the apex of the mystery. Never in this world had Cap'n Abe intended to take the chest with him to sea—or wherever else he had it in his mind to go.

Nor was the chest intended to be returned to the store until Cap'n Abe himself came back from his mysterious journey. The fact that Perry Baker had shipped it in his own name instead of that of the owner had brought about this unexpected incident.

Washy Gallup's gossip—his doubt regarding Cap'n Abe's shipping on a sea voyage—now came

home to Louise with force. Washy suggested that the storekeeper was afraid of the sea; that in all his years at Cardhaven he had never been known to venture out of the quiet waters of the bay.

To the girl's mind, too, came the remembrance of that talk she had had with Cap'n Abe on the evening of her arrival at the store. Was there something he had said then that explained this mystery?

He had told her of the wreck of the *Bravo* and the drowning of Captain Joshua Silt, his father, in sight of his mother's window. She had been powerfully affected by that awful tragedy; this could not be doubted.

And the son, Cap'n Abe, a posthumous child, might indeed have come into the world with that horror of the sea which must have filled his poor mother's soul.

"It would explain why Uncle Abram never became a sailor—the only Silt for generations who remained ashore. Yet, he spoke that night as though he loved the sea—or the romance of it, at least," Louise thought.

"Perhaps, too, his own inability to sail to foreign shores and his terror of the sea made him so worship Cap'n Amazon's prowess. For they say he was continually relating stories of his brother's adventures—even more marvelous tales than Cap'n Amazon himself has related.

"Such a misfortune as Cap'n Abe's fear of the sea may easily explain his brother's good-natured scorn of him. Uncle Amazon doesn't say much about him; but I can see he looks upon Cap'n Abe as a weakling.

"But," sighed the girl in conclusion, "even this does not explain the mystery of the chest, or where Cap'n Abe can be hiding. I wonder if Uncle Amazon knows?"

As on previous occasions, Louise
deterred from putting a searching que
Amazon because of his look and mar
tle she had seen of Cap'n Abe assure
would have felt no hesitancy in ap
mild-mannered storekeeper upon any

But the master mariner seemed to
different personality. The way he l
the idlers in the store that afternoon
chest was broken open, and his ref
any further explanation of Cap'n A
pinched out Louise's courage as one
out a candle wick.

That suspicion was rife in the co
that the story of the strange conte
Abe's chest had spread like a prairi
was sure. Yet at supper time Cap'n
as calm and cheerful as usual and
nored the accident of the afternoon.

with lavish hand. "That Lawford Tapp knows where the critters school, if he doesn't know much else."

"Oh, Uncle Amazon! I think he is a very intelligent young man. Only he wastes his time so!"

"He knows enough book l'arnin', I do allow," agreed Cap'n Amazon. "But fritters away his time as you say. They all do that over to Tapp P'int, I cal'late."

"I wonder how it came to be called Tapp Point?" Louise asked, with a suddenly sharpened curiosity.

"'Cause it's belonged to the Tapps since away back,—or, so Cap'n Joab says. That sand heap never was wuth a punched nickel a ton till these city folks began to build along The Beaches."

Louise, in her own mind, immediately constructed another theory about Lawford Tapp, "the fisherman's son." The sandy point had been sold to the builder of the very ornate villa now crowning it, and the proceeds of that sale had paid for the *Merry Andrew* sloop and the expensive fishing rod and the clothes of superquality which the young man wore.

She shrank, however, from commenting upon this extravagant and spendthrift trait in his character, even to Uncle Amazon. Nor would she have spoken to anybody else upon the subject.

Something had happened to Louise Grayling on

this adventurous afternoon—something of which she scarcely dared think, let alone talk!

The grip of fear at her heart when she thought Lawford was drowning had startled her as much as the accident itself. She had seen men in peril before—in deadly peril—without feeling any personal terror for their fate.

In that moment when Lawford was sinking and she was preparing to leap to his aid, Louise had realized this fact. And in her inmost soul she admitted—with a thrill that shook her physically as well as spiritually—that her interest in this Cape Cod fisherman's son was an interest rooted in her inmost being.

The incident of the wrecked sea chest held her attention in only a secondary degree. All through supper she was listening for Betty Gallup's heavy step. She knew she could not sleep that night without knowing how Lawford was.

For the very reason that she felt so deeply regarding it, she shrank from talking with Cap'n Amazon of the accident that had happened to Lawford. She was glad the substitute storekeeper had "gone for'ard" again to attend to customers when Betty came clumping up the back steps.

"He's all right, Miss Lou," said the kindly woman, patting the girl's hand. "I waited to see Doc Ambrose when he come back from the P'int.

He says there ain't a thing the matter with him that vinegar an' brown paper won't cure.

"But land sakes! Miss Lou, ain't this an awful thing 'bout your Uncle Abe's chest? That old pirate knows more'n he'd ought to 'bout what's come o' Cap'n Abe, even if they ain't brought it home to him yit."

"Now, Betty, I wish you wouldn't," begged the girl. "Why should you give currency to such foolish gossip?"

"What foolish gossip?" snapped the woman.

"Why, about my Uncle Amazon."

"How d'ye *know* he's your uncle at all?" demanded Betty. "You never seen him before he come here. You never knowed nothin' 'bout him, so you said, 'fore you come here to Cardhaven."

"But, Betty——"

"Ain't no 'buts' about it!" fiercely declared the "able seaman." "Cap'n Abe's gone—disappeared. We don't know what's become of him. Course, Huldy Baker was a silly to think Cap'n Abe had been murdered and cut up like shark bait and shipped away in that old chest."

"Oh!"

"Yes. 'Cause Perry seen Cap'n Abe himself that night when he took the chest away. That was ridic'lous. But then, Huldy Baker ain't got right good sense, nor never had.

"But it stands to reason Cap'n Abe had no intent

of shipping aboard any craft with sich dunnage in his chest as they say was in it."

"No-o. I suppose that is so," admitted Louise.

"Then, what's become of the poor man?" Betty ejaculated.

"Why, nobody seems to know. Not even Uncle Amazon."

"Have you axed him?" demanded the other bluntly.

"No. I haven't done that."

"Humph!" was the rejoinder. "You're just as much afeared on him as the rest on us. You take it from me, Miss Lou, he's been a hard man on his own quarter-deck. He ain't no more like Cap'n Abe than buttermilk's like tartaric acid.

"Cap'n Abe warn't no seafarin' man," pursued Betty, "though he had the lingo on his tongue and 'peared as salt as a dried pollock. It's in my mind that he wouldn't never re'lly go to sea—'nless he was egged on to it."

Here it was again! That same doubt as expressed by Washy Gallup—the suggestion that Cap'n Abe Silt possessed an inborn fear of the sea that he had never openly confessed.

"Why do you say that, Betty?" Louise hesitatingly asked the old woman.

"'Cause I've knowed Cap'n Abe for more'n twenty year, and in all that endurin' time he's stuck as close to shore as a fiddler. With all his bold

talk about ships and sailin', I tell you he warn't a seafarin' man."

"But what has Uncle Amazon to do with the mystery of his brother's absence?" demanded Louise.

"Humph! If he *is* Cap'n Abe's brother. Now, now, you don't know no more about this old pirate than I do, Miss Lou. He influenced Cap'n Abe somehow, or someway, so't he cut his hawser and drifted out o' soundings—that's sure! Here this feller callin' himself Am'zon Silt has got the store an' all it holds, an' Cap'n Abe's money, and ev'rything."

"Oh, Betty, how foolishly you talk," sighed the girl.

"Humph! Mebbe. And then again, mebbe it ain't foolish. Them men to-day thought they could scare that old pirate into admittin' something if they sprung Cap'n Abe's chest on him. Oh, I knowed they was goin' to do it," admitted Betty.

"Course, they had no idee what was in the chest. Bustin' it open was an accident. Perry Baker's as clumsy as a cow. But you see, Miss Lou, just how cool that ol' pirate took it all. Washy was tellin' me. He just browbeat 'em an' left 'em with all their canvas slattin'.

"Oh, you can't tell me! That old pirate's handled a crew without no tongs, you may lay to that! And what he's done to poor old Cap'n Abe——"

She went away shaking a sorrowful head and without finishing her sentence. Louise was unable to shake off the burden of doubt of Cap'n Amazon's character and good intentions. She felt that she could not spend the long evening in his company, and bidding him good-night through the open store door she retired to the upper floor.

She felt that sleep was far from her eyelids on this night; therefore she lit a candle and went into the storeroom to get something to read. She selected a much battered volume, printed in an early year of the nineteenth century, its title being:

LANDSMEN'S TALES:

Seafaring Yarns of a Lubber.

Louise became enthralled by the narratives of perilous adventure and odd happenings on shipboard which the author claimed to have himself observed. She read for an hour or more, while the sounds in the store below gradually ceased and she heard Cap'n Amazon close and lock the front door for the night.

Silence below. Outside the lap, lap, lap of the waves on the strand and the rising moan of the surf over Gulf Rocks.

Louise turned a page. She plunged into another yarn. Breathlessly and almost fearfully she read it to the end—the very story of the murdered alba-

tross and the sailors' superstitious belief in the bird's bad influence, as she had heard Cap'n Amazon relate it to Aunt Euphemia Conroth.

She laid down the book at last in amazement and confusion. There was no doubt now of Cap'n Amazon's mendacity. This book of nautical tales had been written and printed *long before Amazon Silt was born!*

And if the falseness of his wild narratives was established, was it a far cry to Betty Gallup's suspicions and accusations? What and who was this man, who called himself Amazon Silt who had taken Cap'n Abe's place in the store on the Shell Road?

Louise lay with wide-open eyes for a long time. Then she crept out of bed and turned the key in the lock of her door—the first time she had thought to do such a thing since her arrival at Cardhaven.

CHAPTER XX

THE SUN WORSHIPERS

"THEM movin' picture people are hoppin' about The Beaches like sandpipers," observed Cap'n Amazon at the breakfast table. "And I opine they air pretty average useless, too. They were hurrahin' around all day yest'day while you was out fishin'. Want to take a picture of Abe's old store here. Dunno what to do about it."

Louise was too much disturbed by her discoveries of overnight to give much attention to this subject.

"It's Abe's store, you see," went on Cap'n Amazon. "Dunno how he'd feel 'bout havin' it took in a picture and showed all over the country. It needs a coat o' paint hi-mighty bad. Ought to be fixed up some 'fore havin' its picture took—don't ye think so, Niece Louise?"

The girl awoke to the matter sufficiently to advise him:

"The lack of paint will not show in the picture, Uncle Amazon. And I suppose they want the store for a location just because it is weather-beaten and old-fashioned."

"I want to know! Well, now, if I was in the

photograftin' business, seems t' me I'd pick out the nice-lookin' places to make pictures of. I knowed a feller once that made a business of takin' photografts in furin' parts. He sailed with me when I was master of the *Blue Sparrow*—clipper built she was, an' a spankin' fine craft. We——"

"Oh, Uncle Amazon!" Louise cried, rising from the table suddenly, "you'll have to excuse me. I—I forgot something upstairs. Yes—I've finished my breakfast. Betty can clear off."

She fairly ran away from the table. It seemed to her as though she could not sit and listen to another of his preposterous stories. It would be on the tip of her tongue to declare her disbelief in his accuracy. How and where he had gained access to Cap'n Abe's store of nautical romances she could not imagine; but she was convinced that many, if not all, of his supposedly personal adventures were entirely fictitious in so far as his own part in them was concerned.

She put on her hat and went out of the back door in order to escape further intercourse with Cap'n Amazon for the present. On the shore she found the spot below the Bozewell bungalow a busy scene. This was a perfect day for "the sun worshipers," as somebody has dubbed motion picture people. Director Anscomb was evidently planning to secure several scenes and the entire company was on hand.

Louise saw that there were a number of spectators besides herself—some from the town, but mostly young folk from the cottages along The Beaches.

Lawford Tapp was present, and she waved her hand to him, yet preserving an air of merely good comradeship. She was glad that he did not know that it was she who had leaped to his rescue the day before. Considering the nature of the feeling she had for him, into the knowledge of which his peril had surprised her, the girl could not endure any intimate conversation with Lawford. Not just then, at least.

Tapp was in the midst of a group of girls, and she remarked his ease of manner. She did not wonder at it, for he was a gentleman by instinct no matter what his social level might be. Three of the girls were those Louise Grayling believed to be daughters of Lawford's employer.

She saw that he was breaking away from the group with the intention of coming to her. L'Enfant Terrible said something to him and laughed shrilly. She saw Lawford's cheek redden.

So Louise welcomed the approach of Mr. Bane, who chanced at the moment to be idle.

"Now you will see us grinding them out, Miss Grayling," the actor said.

Louise broke into a series of questions regarding the taking of the pictures. Her evident interest in

the big leading man halted Lawford's approach. Besides, Miss Louder, who had evidently been introduced to the Taffy King's son, attached herself to him.

She was a pretty girl despite the layers of grease paint necessary to accentuate the lights and shadows of her piquant face. Her manner with men was free without being bold. With a big parasol over her shoulder, she adapted her step to Lawford's and they strolled nearer.

Bane was speaking of the script he had previously mentioned as containing a part eminently fitted for Louise. As Lawford and Miss Louder passed he said:

"I am sure you can do well in that part, Miss Grayling. It is exactly your style."

Had Lawford any previous reason for doubting Louise Grayling's connection with the moving picture industry this overheard remark would have lulled such a doubt to sleep.

The young man realized well enough that Louise was a very different girl from the blithe young woman at his side. But how could he make I. Tapp see it?

Money was not everything in the world; Lawford Tapp was far from thinking it was. He had always considered it of much less importance than the things one could exchange it for.

However, never having felt the necessity for

working for mere pelf, and being untrained for any form of industry whatsoever, his father's threat of disowning him loomed a serious menace to the young man.

Not for himself did Lawford fear. He felt warm blood in his veins, vigor in his muscles, a keen edge to his nerves. He could work—preferably with his hands. He realized quite fully his limitation of brain power.

But what right had he to ask any girl to share his lot—especially a girl like Louise Grayling, who he supposed won a sufficient livelihood in a profession the emoluments of which must be far greater than those of any trade he might seek to follow?

He saw now that after his somewhat desultory college course, his months of loafing about on sea and shore had actually unfitted him for concentration upon any ordinary work. And he was not sanguine enough to expect an extraordinary situation to come his way.

Then, too, the young man realized that Louise Grayling had not given him the least encouragement to lead him to believe that she thought of him at all. At this moment her preference for Bane's society seemed marked. Already Cecile had rasped Lawford regarding the leading man's attentions to Louise.

Lawford could not face the taunting glances of

Marian and Prue. They had come down to the beach on this particular morning he felt sure to comment—and not kindly—upon Louise Grayling. He hoped that she was not included in the director's plans for the day, and he was glad to see that she had no make-up on, as had these other young women.

So he strolled on grimly with Miss Louder, who would not be called for work for an hour. But the young man heard little of her chatter.

The tide was at the ebb and the two walked on at the edge of the splashing surf, where the strand was almost as firm as a cement walk. The curve of the beach took them toward the lighthouse and here, approaching with bucket and clam hoe along the flats, was the very lightkeeper who had watched the *Merry Andrew* and her crew the day before when Lawford met with his accident.

"There ye be, Mr. Lawford," crowed the man, "as chipper as a sandpiper. But I swanny, I didn't ever expect t' hail ye again this side o' Jordan, one spell yest'day."

"You had your glass on us, did you?" Lawford said languidly.

"I did, young man—I did. An' when that bobbin' skiff walloped ye on the side of the head I never 'spected t' see you come up again. If it hadn't been for this little lady who—— Shucks, now! This ain't her 'tall, is it?"

"Oh, Mr. Tapp, were you in a boating accident yesterday?" cried Miss Louder.

"I was overboard—yes," responded Lawford, but rather blankly, for he was startled by the lightkeeper's statement. "What do you mean, Jonas?" to the lightkeeper. "Didn't Betty Gallup haul me inboard?"

"Bet Gallup—nawthin'!" exploded Jonas with disgust. "She handled that sloop o' yourn all right. I give her credit for that. But 'twas that there gal stayin' at Cap'n Abe's. Ye had her out with ye, eh?"

"Miss Grayling? Certainly."

"She's some gal, even if she is city bred," was the lightkeeper's enthusiastic observation. "An' quick! My soul! Ye'd ought to seen her kick off her skirt an' shoes an' dive after ye! I swanny, she was a sight!"

"I should think she would have been!" gasped Miss Louder with some scorn. "Goodness me, she must be a regular stunt actress!" and she laughed shrilly.

But Lawford gave her small attention. "Jonas, do you mean that?" he asked. "I thought it was Betty who saved me. Why, dad said this morning he was going to send the old woman a check. He doesn't much approve of me," and the heir of the Taffy King smiled rather grimly, "but as I'm the last Tapp——"

"He's glad ye didn't git done for *com*-pletely, heh?" suggested Jonas, and giggled. "I wouldn't for a minute stand in the way of Bet Gallup's gittin' what's due her. She did pick ye both up, Lawford. But, land sakes! ye'd been six fathoms down, all right, if it hadn't been for that gal at Cap'n Abe's."

"I—I had no idea of it. I never even thanked her," muttered Lawford. "What can she think of me?"

But not even Miss Louder heard this. She realized, however, that the young man who she had been told was "the greatest catch at The Beaches" was much distrait and that her conversation seemed not to interest him at all.

They went back toward the scene of the film activities. It was the hour of the usual promenade on the sands. Everybody in the summer colony appeared on the beach while the walking along the water's edge was fine. This promenade hour was even more popular than the bathing hour which was, of course, at high tide.

Groups of women, young and old, strolled under gay parasols, or camped on the sands to chat. Brilliantly striped marquees were set up below some of the cottages, in which tea and other refreshments were served. The younger people fluttered about, talking and laughing, much like a flock of Mother Carey's chickens before a storm.

There were several wagons over from the Haven, in which the small-fry summer visitors arrived and joined their more aristocratic neighbors. The wagons stopped upon the Shell Road and the passengers climbed down to the beach between two of the larger cottages.

The people at The Beaches had tried on several occasions to inclose the stretch of shore below their summer homes, and to make it a private beach. But even the most acquisitive of the town councilmen (and there were several of the fraternity of the Itching Palm in the council) dared not establish such a precedent. The right of the public to the shore at tide-water could not safely be ignored in a community of fishermen and clam diggers.

So the shore on this morning had become a gay scene, with the interest centering on the open air studio of the film company. Lawford saw Louise walking on alone along the edge of the water. Bane had been called into conference by the director.

Lawford could not well hasten his steps and desert Miss Louder, but he desired strongly to do so. And ere the film actress lingeringly left him to rejoin her company, Louise was some distance in advance.

His sisters were near her. Lawford could see them look at her most superciliously, and the saucy Cecile said something that made Prue laugh aloud.

Just beyond the Tapp girls was approaching a

group of women and men. Lawford recognized them as the Perritons and their friends. Lawford had no particular interest in the summer crowd himself; but he knew the Perritons were influential people in the social world.

With them was a majestic person the young man had never seen before. Undoubtedly the "Lady from Poughkeepsie." Her pink countenance and beautifully dressed gray hair showed to excellent advantage under the black and white parasol she carried.

She stepped eagerly before the party, calling:

"Louise!"

Louise Grayling raised her head and waved a welcoming hand.

"What brings you forth so early in the morning, auntie?" she asked, her voice ringing clearly across the sands.

There were at least four dumfounded spectators of this meeting, and they were all named Tapp.

Lawford stood rooted to the sands, feeling quite as though the universe had fallen into chaos. It was only L'Enfant Terrible who found speech.

"Oh, my!" she cried. "What a mistake! The movie queen turns out to be some pumpkins!"

CHAPTER XXI

DISCOVERIES

LOUISE, knowing Aunt Euphemia so well, was immediately aware that the haughty lady had something more than ordinarily unpleasant to communicate. It was nothing about Uncle Amazon and the Shell Road store; some other wind of mischance had ruffled her soul.

But the girl ignored Aunt Euphemia's signals for several minutes; until she made herself, indeed, more familiar with the manner and personal attributes of these new acquaintances. There was a Miss Perriton of about her own age whom she liked at first sight. Two or three men of the party were clean-cut and attractive fellows. Despite the fact that their cottage had been so recently opened for the season, the Perritons had already assembled a considerable house party.

"Louise, I wish to talk to you," at last said Mrs. Conroth grimly.

"True," sighed her niece. "And how extremely exact you always are in your use of the language, auntie. You never wish to talk *with* me. *You* will do all the talking as usual, I fear."

"You are inclined to be saucy," bruskly rejoined Aunt Euphemia. "As your father is away I feel more deeply my responsibility in this matter. You are a wayward girl—you always have been."

"You don't expect me to agree with you on that point, do you, auntie?" Louise asked sweetly.

Mrs. Conroth ignored the retort, continuing: "I am not amazed, after seeing your surroundings at the Silt place, that you should become familiar with these common longshore characters. But this that I have just learned—only this forenoon in fact—astonishes me beyond measure; it does, indeed!"

"Let me be astonished, too, auntie. I love a surprise," drawled her niece.

"Where were you yesterday?" demanded Aunt Euphemia sharply.

Louise at once thought she knew what was coming. She smiled as she replied: "Out fishing."

"And with whom, may I ask?"

"With Betty Gallup, Uncle Abram's housekeeper."

"But the man?"

"Oh! Mr. Tapp, you mean? A very pleasant young man, auntie."

"That is what I was told, Louise," her aunt said mournfully. "With young Tapp. And you have been seen with him frequently. It is being remarked by the whole colony. Of course, you can

mean nothing by this intimacy. It arises from your thoughtlessness, I presume. You must understand that he is not—er—— Well, the Tapps are not of our set, Louise."

"My goodness, no!" laughed the girl cheerfully. "The Tapps are real Cape Codders, I believe."

Aunt Euphemia raised her eyebrows and her lorgnette together. "I do not understand you, I fear. What the Tapps are by blood, I do not know. But they are not in society at all—not at all!"

"Not in society?" repeated Louise, puzzled indeed.

"Scarcely. Of course, as Mrs. Perriton says, the way the cottagers are situated here at The Beaches, the Tapps *must* be treated with a certain friendliness. That quite impossible 'I. Tapp,' as he advertises himself, owns all the Point and might easily make it very disagreeable for the rest of the colony if he so chose."

She stopped because of the expression on her niece's countenance.

"What *do* you mean?" Louise asked. "Who —who are these Tapps?"

"My dear child! Didn't you know? Was I blaming you for a fault of which you were not intentionally guilty? See how wrong you are to go unwarned and unaccompanied to strange places and into strange company. I thought you were

merely having a mild flirtation with that young man in the full light of understanding."

Louise controlled her voice and her countenance with an effort. "Tell me, Aunt Euphemia," she repeated, "just who Lawford Tapp is?"

"His father is a manufacturer of cheap candies. He is advertised far and wide as 'I. Tapp, the Salt Water Taffy King.' Fancy! I presume you are quite right; they probably were nothing more than clam diggers originally. The wife and daughters are extremely raw; no other word expresses it. And that house! Have you seen it close to? There was never anything quite so awful built outside an architect's nightmare."

"They own Tapp Point? *That* is Lawford's home? Those girls are his sisters?" Louise murmured almost breathlessly.

"Whom *did* you take that young man to be, Louise?"

"A fisherman's son," confessed her niece, in a very small voice. And at that Aunt Euphemia all but fainted.

But Louise would say nothing more—just then. On the approach of some of her friends, Mrs. Conroth was forced to put a cap upon her vexation, and bid her niece good-day as sweetly as though she had never dreamed of boxing her ears.

Louise climbed the nearest stairs to the summit of the bluff. She felt she could not meet Lawford

at this time, and he was between her and the moving picture actors.

Within the past few hours several things that had seemed stable in Louise Grayling's life had been shaken.

She had accepted in the very first of her acquaintanceship with Lawford Tapp the supposition that his social position was quite inferior to her own. She was too broadly democratic to hold that as an insurmountable barrier between them.

Her disapproval of the young man grew out of her belief in his identity as a mere "hired man" of the wealthy owner of the villa on the Point. She had considered that a man who was so intelligent and well educated and at the same time so unambitious was lacking in those attributes of character necessary to make him a success in life.

His love for the open—for the sea and shore and all that pertained to them—coincided exactly with Louise's own aspirations. She considered it all right that her father and herself spent much of their time as Lawford spent his. Only, daddy-prof often added to the sum-total of human knowledge by his investigations, and sometimes added to their financial investments through his work as well.

Until now she had considered Lawford Tapp's tendencies toward living such an irresponsible existence as all wrong—for him. The rather ex-

citing information she had just gained changed her mental attitude toward the young man entirely.

Louise gave no consideration whatsoever to Aunt Euphemia's snobbish stand in the matter of Lawford's social position. Professor Grayling had laughingly said that Euphemia chose to ignore the family's small beginnings in America. True, the English Graylings possessed a crest and a pedigree as long as the moral law. But in America the family had begun by being small tradespeople and farmers.

Of course, Louise considered, Aunt Euphemia would be very unpleasant and bothersome about this matter. Louise had hoped to escape all that for the summer by fleeing to Cap'n Abe's store at Cardhaven.

However (and the girl's lips set firmly) she was determined to take her own gait—to stand upon her own opinion—to refuse to be swerved from her chosen course by any consideration. Lawford Tapp was in a financial situation to spend his time in the improvement of his body and mind without regard to money considerations. Louise foresaw that they were going to have a delightful time together along the shore here, until daddy-prof came home in the fall. And then——

She saw no such cloud upon the horizon as Lawford saw. Louise acknowledged the existence of nothing—not even Aunt Euphemia's opposition—

which could abate the happiness she believed within her grasp.

She admitted that her interest in Lawford had risen far above the mark of mere friendly feeling. When she had seen him sinking the day before, and in peril of his life, she knew beyond peradventure that his well-being and safety meant more to her than anything else in the world.

Now she was only anxious to have him learn that she instead of Betty had leaped into the sea after him. She would avoid him no more. Only she did not wish to meet him there on the beach before all those idlers. Louise feared that if she did so, she would betray her happiness. She thrilled with it—she was obsessed with the thought that there was nothing, after all, to separate Lawford and herself!

Yet the day passed without his coming to the store on the Shell Road. Louise still felt some disturbance of mind regarding Cap'n Amazon. She kept away from him as much as possible, for she feared that she might be tempted to blurt out just what she thought of his ridiculous stories.

She did not like to hear Betty Gallup utter her diatribes against the master mariner; although in secret she was inclined to accept as true many of the "able seaman's" strictures upon Cap'n Amazon's character.

It was really hard when she was in his presence

to think of him as an audacious prevaricator—and perhaps worse. He was so kindly in his manner and speech to her. His brisk consideration for her comfort at all times—his wistful glances for Jerry, the ancient canary, and the tenderness he showed the bird—even his desire to placate Diddimus, the tortoise-shell cat—all these things withstood the growing ill-opinion being fostered in Louise Grayling's mind. Who and what was this mysterious person calling himself Cap'n Amazon Silt?

She had, too, a desire to know just how many of those weird stories he told were filched from Cap'n Abe's accumulation of nautical literature. When Cap'n Amazon had gained access to the chest of books Louise could not imagine; but the fact remained that he had at least two of the stories pat.

Louise had promised to spend the evening at the Perritons, and did so; but she returned to Cap'n Abe's store early and did not invite her escort in, although he was a youth eager to taste the novelty of being intimate with "one of these old Cape Codders," as he expressed it.

"No," she told young Malcolm Standish firmly. "Uncle Amazon is not to be made a peepshow of by the idle rich of The Beaches. Besides, from your own name, you should be a descendant of Miles Standish, and blood relation to these Cape Codders yourself. And Uncle Amazon and Uncle Abram are fine old gentlemen." She said it boldly,

whether she could believe it about Cap'n Amazon or not. "I will not play showman."

"Oh, say! Ford Tapp comes here. I saw his car standing outside the other evening."

"Mr. Tapp," Louise explained calmly, "comes in the right spirit. He is a friend of the—ahem —family. He is well known to Cap'n Abe who owns the store and has made himself acquainted with Cap'n Amazon over the counter."

"And how has he made himself so solid with you, Miss Grayling?" Standish asked impudently.

"By his gentlemanly behavior, and because he knows a deal more about boat-sailing and the shores than I know," she retorted demurely.

"Leave it to me!" exclaimed Malcolm Standish. "I am going to learn navigation and fishology at once."

"But—don't you think you may be too late?" she asked him, running up the steps. "Good-night, Mr. Standish!"

Upon going indoors she did not find Cap'n Amazon. The lamp was burning in the living-room, but he was not there and the store was dark. Louise mounted the stairs, rather glad of his absence; but when she came to the top of the flight she saw the lamplight streaming through the open door of her uncle's bedroom. Diddimus, with waving tail, was just advancing into the "cabin," as Cap'n Amazon called the chamber he occupied.

Knowing that he particularly objected to having any of his possessions disturbed, and fearing that Diddimus might do some mischief there, Louise followed the tortoise-shell, calling to him:

"Come out of there! Come out instantly, Diddimus! What do you mean by venturing in where we are all forbidden to enter? Don't you know, Diddimus, that only fools dare venture where angels fear to tread? Scat!"

Something on the washstand caught Louise's glance. In the bottom of the washbowl was the stain of a dark brown liquid. Beside it stood a bottle the label of which she could read from the doorway.

She caught her breath, standing for half a minute as though entranced. Diddimus, hearing a distant footstep, and evidently suspecting it, whisked past Louise out of the room.

There were other articles on the washstand that claimed the girl's notice; but it was to the bottle labeled "Walnut Stain" that her gaze returned. She crept away to her own room, lit her lamp, and did not even see Cap'n Amazon Silt again that night.

CHAPTER XXII

SHOCKING NEWS

"FORD TAPP was here last night," Cap'n Amazon told Louise at the breakfast table. "I cal'late he was lookin' for you, though he didn't just up an' say so. Seemed worried like for fear't you wouldn't have a good opinion of him."

"Mercy! what has he done?" cried the girl laughing, for even the sound of Lawford's name made her glad.

"Seems it's what he ain't done. What's all this 'bout your jumpin' overboard t'other day and savin' him from drownin'?" and the mariner fairly beamed upon her.

"Oh, uncle, you mustn't believe everything you hear!"

"No? But Bet Gallup says 'tis so. You air a hi-mighty plucky girl, I guess. I allus have thought so—and so did Abe. But I kind of feel as though I'm sort o' responsible for your safety an' well-bein' while you air here, and I can't countenance no such actions."

"Now, uncle!"

"Fellers like Ford Tapp air as plenty as horse-

briers in a sand lot; but girls like you ain't made often, I cal'late. Next time that feller has to be rescued, you let Bet Gallup do it."

She knew Cap'n Amazon well enough now to see that his roughness was assumed. His eyes were moist as his gaze rested on her face, and he blew his nose noisily at the end of his speech.

"You take keer o' yourself, Louise," he added huskily. "If anything should happen to you, what —what would Abe say?"

The depth of his feeling for her—so plainly and so unexpectedly displayed—halted Louise in her already formed intention. She had arisen on this morning, determined to "have it out" with Cap'n Amazon Silt. On several points she wished to be enlightened—felt that she had a right to demand an explanation.

For she was quite positive that Cap'n Amazon was not at all what he claimed to be. His actual personality was as yet a mystery to her; but she was positive on this point: He was *not* Captain Amazon Silt, master mariner and rover of the seas. He was an entirely different person, and Louise desired to know what he meant by this masquerade.

His seamanship, his speech, his masterful manner, were assumed. And in the matter of his related adventures the girl was confident that they were mere repetitions of what he had read.

Now Louise suddenly remembered how Cap'n

Abe had welcomed her here at the old store, and how cheerfully and tenderly this piratical looking substitute for the storekeeper had assumed her care. No relative or friend could have been kinder to her than Cap'n Amazon.

How could she, then, stand before him and say: "Cap'n Amazon, you are an impostor. You have assumed a character that is not your own. You tell awful stories about adventures that never befell you. What do you mean by it all? And, in conclusion and above all, *Where is Cap'n Abe?*"

This had been Louise's intention when she came downstairs on this morning. The nagging of Betty Gallup, the gossip of the other neighbors, the wild suspicions whispered from lip to lip did not influence her so much. It was what she had herself discovered the evening before in the captain's "cabin" that urged her on.

Now Cap'n Amazon's display of tenderness "took all the wind out of her sails," as Betty Gallup would have said.

Louise watched him stirring about the living-room, chirruping to old Jerry and thrusting his finger into the cage for the bird to hop upon it, and finally shuffling off into the store. She hesitatingly followed him. She desired to speak, but could not easily do so. And now Cap'n Joab Beecher was before her.

Amiel Perdue had been uptown and brought down the early mail, of which the most important piece was always the Boston morning paper. Cap'n Joab had helped himself to this and was already unfolding it.

"What's in the *Globe* paper, Joab?" asked Cap'n Amazon. "You millionaires 'round here git more time to read it than ever *I* do, I vum!"

"It don't cost you nothin' to have us read it," said Cap'n Joab easily. "The news is all here arter we git through."

"Uh-huh! I s'pose so. I'd ought to thank ye, I don't dispute, for keepin' the paper from feelin' lonesome.

"I dunno why Abe takes it, anyway, 'cept to foller the sailin's and arrivals at the port o' Boston —'nless he finds more time to read than ever I do. I ain't ever been so busy in my life as I be in this store—'nless it was when I shipped a menagerie for a feller at a Dutch Guinea port and his monkeys broke out o' their cages when we was two days at sea and they tried to run the ship.

"That was some v'y'ge, as the feller said," continued Cap'n Amazon, getting well under way as he lit his after-breakfast pipe. "Them monkeys kep' all the crew on the jump and the afterguard scurcely got a meal in peace. I was——"

"Belay there!" advised Cap'n Joab, with disgust. "Save that yarn for the dog watch. What

was it ye said that craft was named Cap'n Abe sailed in?"

Cap'n Amazon stopped in his story-telling and was silent for an instant. Louise, who had stood at the inner doorway listening, turned to go, when she heard the substitute storekeeper finally say:

"*Curlew*, out o' Boston."

The name caught the girl's instant attention and she felt suddenly apprehensive.

"Here's news o' her," Cap'n Joab said in a hushed voice. "And it ain't good news, Cap'n Silt."

"What d'ye mean?" asked the latter.

"Report from Fayal. A Portugee fisherman's picked up and brought in a boat with '*Curlew*' painted on her stern, and he saw spars and wreckage driftin' near the empty boat. There's been a hurricane out there. It—it looks bad, Cap'n Silt."

Before the latter could speak again Louise was at his side and had seized his tattooed arm.

"Uncle Amazon!" she gasped. "Not the *Curlew?* Didn't I tell you before? That is the schooner daddy-prof's party sailed upon. Can there be two *Curlews?*"

"My soul and body!" exclaimed Cap'n Joab.

It was Cap'n Amazon who kept his head.

"Not likely to be two craft of the same name and register—no, my dear," he said, patting her hand. "But don't take this so much to heart. It's

only rumor. A dozen things might have happened to set that boat adrift. Ain't that so, Cap'n Joab?"

Cap'n Joab swallowed hard and nodded; but his wind-bitten face displayed much distress. "I had no idee the gal's father was aboard that schooner with Cap'n Abe."

"Why, sure! I forgot it for a minute," Cap'n Amazon said cheerfully. "There, there, my dear. Don't take on so. Abe's with your father, if so be anything has happened the *Curlew;* and Abe'll take keer o' him. Sure he will! Ain't he a Silt? And lemme tell you a Silt never backed down when trouble riz up to face him. No, sir!"

"But if they have been wrecked?" groaned Louise. "Both father and Uncle Abram. What shall we do about it, Uncle Amazon?"

In this moment of trouble she clung to the master mariner as her single recourse. And impostor or no, he who called himself Amazon Silt did not fail her.

"There ain't nothing much we can rightly do at this minute, Niece Louise," he told her firmly, still patting her morsel of a hand in his huge one. "We'll watch the noospapers and I'll send a telegraph dispatch to the ship news office in N'York and git just the latest word there is 'bout the *Curlew.*

"You be brave, girl—you be brave. Abe an' Professor Grayling being together, o' course they'll

get along all right. One'll help t'other. Two pullin' on the sheet can allus h'ist the sail quicker than one. Keep your heart up, Louise."

She looked at him strangely for a moment. The tears frankly standing in his eyes, the quivering muscles of his face, his expression of keen sorrow for her fears—all impressed her. She suddenly kissed him in gratitude, impostor though she knew him to be, and then ran away. Cap'n Joab hissed across the counter:

"Ye don't *know* that Cap'n Abe's on that there craft, Am'zon Silt!"

"Well, if I don't—an' if you don't—don't lemme hear you makin' any cracks about it 'round this store so't she'll hear ye," growled Cap'n Amazon, boring into the very soul of the flustered Joab with his fierce gaze.

Louise did not hear the expression of these doubts; but she suffered uncertainties in her own mind. She longed to talk with somebody to whom she could tell all that was in her thoughts. Aunt Euphemia was out of the question, of course; although she must reveal to her the possible peril menacing Professor Grayling. Betty Gallup could not be trusted, Louise knew. And the day dragged by its limping hours without Lawford Tapp's com-

this time. In the empire of the Taffy King there was revolution, and this trouble dated from the hour on the previous morning when Louise had met and greeted Aunt Euphemia on the beach.

The Tapp sisters may have been purse-proud and a little vulgar—from Aunt Euphemia's point of view, at least—but they did not lack acumen. They had seen and heard the greeting of Louise by the Perritons and the extremely haughty Lady from Poughkeepsie, and knew that Louise must be "a somebody."

Cecile, young and bold enough to be direct, was not long in making discoveries. With a rather blank expression of countenance L'Enfant Terrible, for once almost speechless, beckoned her sisters to one side.

"Pestiferous infant," drawled Marian, "tell us who she is?"

"Is she a Broadway star?" asked Prue.

"Oh, she's a star all right," Cecile said, with disgust in her tone. "We've been a trio of sillies, ignoring *her*. Fordy's fallen on both feet—only he's too dense to know it, I s'pose."

"Tell us!" commanded Prue. "Who is she?"

"She's no screen actress," answered the gloomy Cecile.

"Who is she, then?" gasped Marian.

"Sue Perriton says she is Mrs. Conroth's niece, and Mrs. Conroth is all the Society with a capital

letter there *is*. Now, figure it out," said Cecile tartly. "If you smarties had taken her up right at the start——"

"But we didn't kno-o-ow!" wailed Marian.

"Go on!" commanded Prue grimly.

"Why, Miss Grayling's father is a big scientist, or something, at Washington. Her mother happened to be born here on the Cape; she was a Card. This girl is just stopping over there with that old fellow who keeps the store—her half-uncle—for a lark. What do you know about *that?*"

"My word!" murmured Marian.

"And Ford——"

"He's mamma's precious white-haired boy ***this*** time," declared the slangy Cecile.

"Do—do you suppose he knew it all the time?" questioned Marian.

"Never! Just like old Doc Ambrose says, there isn't much above Fordy's ears but solid bone," scoffed L'Enfant Terrible.

"Wait till ma hears of this," murmured Prue, and they proceeded to beat a retreat for home that their mother might be informed of the wonder. Lawford was already out of sight.

"How really fortunate Fordy is," murmured Mrs. Tapp, having received the shocking news and been revived after it. "Fancy! Mrs. Garreth's own

of the crowd at The Beaches," Prue announced. "We've only been tolerated so far."

"Oh, Prudence!" admonished Mrs. Tapp.

"That's the truth," her second daughter repeated bluntly. "We might as well admit it. Now, if Fordy only puts this over with this Miss Grayling, they'll *have* to take us up; for it's plain to be seen they won't drop Miss Grayling, no matter whom she marries."

"If Fordy doesn't miss the chance," muttered Cecile.

"He can't!"

"He mustn't!"

"He wouldn't be mean enough to drop her just to spite us!" wailed Marian.

"No," said Prue. "He won't do that. Ford isn't a butterfly. You must admit that he's as steadfast as a rock in his likes and dislikes. Once he gets a thing in that head of his—— Well! I'm sure he's fond of Miss Grayling."

"But that big actor?" suggested Cecile.

"Surely," gasped Mrs. Tapp, "the girl cannot fancy such a person as *that?*"

"My! you should just see Judson Bane," sighed Cecile.

"He's the matinee girl's delight," drawled Marian. "Ford has the advantage, however, if he will take it. He's too modest."

Mrs. Tapp's face suddenly paled and she clasped

a plump hand to her bosom. "Oh, girls!" she gasped.

"*Now* what, mother?" begged Prue.

"What will I. Tapp say?"

"Oh, bother father!" scoffed L'Enfant Terrible.

"He doesn't care what Ford does," Prue said.

"Does he ever really care what any of us does?" observed Marian, yet looking doubtfully at her mother.

"You don't understand, girls!" wailed Mrs. Tapp, wringing her hands. "You know he made me write and invite that Johnson girl here."

"Oh, Dot Johnson!" said Prue. "Well, she is harmless."

"She's *not* harmless," declared Mrs. Tapp. "I. Tapp ordered me to get her here because he wants Ford to marry her."

"Marry Dot Johnson?" gasped Prue.

"Oh, bluey!" ejaculated the slangy Cecile.

"But of course Ford won't do it," drawled Marian.

"Then he means to disinherit poor Ford! Oh, yes, he will!" sobbed the lady. "They've had words about it already. You know very well that when once I. Tapp makes up his mind to do a thing, he does it." And there she broke down utterly, with the girls looking at each other in silent horror.

CHAPTER XXIII

BETWEEN THE FIRES

THE discovery of Louise's identity was but a mild shock to Lawford after all. His preconceived prejudice against the ordinary feminine member of "The Profession" had, during his intercourse with Cap'n Abe's niece, been lulled to sleep. Miss Louder and Miss Noyes more nearly embodied his conception of actresses—nice enough young women, perhaps, but entirely different from Louise Grayling.

Lawford forgave the latter for befooling him in the matter of her condition in life; indeed, he realized that he had deceived himself. He had accepted the gossip of the natives—Milt Baker was its originator, he remembered—as true, and so had believed Louise Grayling was connected with the moving picture company.

Her social position made no difference to him. At first sight Lawford Tapp had told himself she was the most charming woman he had ever seen.

For a college graduate of twenty-four he was, though unaware of the fact, rather unsophisticated regarding women.

He had given but slight attention to girls. Perhaps they interested him so little because of his three sisters.

He remembered now that he and Dot Johnson had been pretty good "pals" before he had gone to college, and while Dot was still in middy blouse and wore her hair in plaits.

Now, as he walked along the beach and thought of the daughter of his father's partner, he groaned. He, as well as the women of the family, knew well the Taffy King's obstinacy.

His streak of determination had enabled I. Tapp to reach the pinnacle of business wealth and influence. When he wanted a thing he went after it, *and he got it!*

If his father was really determined that Lawford should marry Dot Johnson, and her parents were willing, the young man had an almost uncanny feeling that the candy manufacturer's purpose would be accomplished.

And yet Lawford knew that such was a coward-feeling. Why should he give up the only thing he had ever really wanted in life—so it seemed to him now—because of any third person's obstinacy?

"Of course, she won't have me anyway," an inner voice told him. And, after a time, Lawford

Further, why should I marry Dot Johnson against my will, whether I can get Louise Grayling or not?"

This thought electrified him. His easy-going, placid disposition had made a coward of him. In his heart and soul he was now ready to fight for what he desired. It was now not merely the question of winning Louise's love. Whether he could win her or not his determination grew to refuse to obey his father's command. He revolted, right then and there. Let his father keep his money. He, Lawford Tapp, would go to work in any case and would support himself.

This was no small resolve on the part of the millionaire's son. He could not remember of ever having put his hand into an empty pocket. His demands on the paternal purse had been more reasonable than most young men of his class perhaps, because of his naturally simple tastes and the life he had led outside the classroom. Without having "gone in" for athletics at Cambridge he was essentially an out-of-door man.

Nevertheless, to stand in open revolt against I. Tapp's command was a very serious thing to do. Lawford appreciated his own shortcomings in the matter of intellect. He knew he was not brilliant enough to make his wit entirely serve him for daily bread—let alone cake and other luxuries. If his father disinherited him he must verily expect to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

It was that evening, after his fruitless call at Cap'n Abe's store, that the young man met his father and had it out. Lawford came back to Tapp Point in the motor boat. As he walked up from the dock there was a sudden eruption of voices from the house, a door banged, and the Taffy King began exploding verbal fireworks as he crunched the gravel under foot.

"I'll show him! Young upstart! Settin' the women on me! Ha! Thinks he can do as he pleases forever and ever, amen! I'll show him!"

Just then he came face to face with "the young upstart." I. Tapp seized his son's arm with a vicious if puny grasp and yelled:

"What d'you mean by it?"

"Mean by what, dad?" asked the boy with that calmness that always irritated I. Tapp.

"Settin' your ma and the girls on me? They all lit on me at once. All crying together some foolishness about your marrying this Grayling girl and putting the family into society."

"Into society?" murmured Lawford. "I—I don't get you."

"You know what they're after," cried the candy manufacturer. "If a dynamite bomb would blow in the walls of that exclusive Back Bay set, they'd use one. And now it turns out this girl's right in the swim—— I thought you said she was a picture actress?"

"I thought she was," stammered Lawford.

"Bah! You thought? You never thought a thing in your life of any consequence."

The young man was silent at this thrust. His silence made I. Tapp even angrier.

"But it makes no difference—no difference at all, I tell you. If she was the queen of Sheba I'd say the same," went on the candy manufacturer wildly. "I've said you shall marry Dorothy Johnson—I've always meant you should; and marry her you shall!"

"No, dad, I'm not going to do any such thing."

Suddenly the Taffy King quieted down. He struggled to control his voice and his shaking hands. A deadly calm mantled his excitement and his eyes glittered as he gazed up at his tall son.

"Is this a straight answer, Lawford? Or are you just talking to hear yourself talk?" he asked coldly.

"I am determined not to marry Dot."

"And you'll marry that other girl?"

"If she'll have me. But whether or no I won't be forced into marriage with a girl I do not love."

"Love!" exploded the Taffy King. Then in a moment he was calm again, only for that inward glow of rage. "People don't really love each other until after marriage. Love is born of propinquity and thrives on usage and custom. You only

think you love this girl. It's after two people have been through a good deal together that they learn what love means."

Lawford was somewhat startled by this philosophy; but he was by no means convinced.

"Whether or no," he repeated, "I think I should have the same right that you had of choosing a wife."

His father brushed this aside without comment. "Do you understand what this means—if you are determined to disobey me?" he snarled.

"I suppose you won't begrudge me a bite and sup till I find a job, dad?" the son said with just a little tremor in his voice. "I know I haven't really anything of my own. You have done everything for me. Your money bought the very clothes I stand in. You gave me the means to buy the *Merry Andrew*. I realize that nothing I have called my own actually belongs to me because I did not earn it——"

"As long as you are amenable to discipline," put in his father gloomily, "you need not feel this way."

"But I do feel it now," said Lawford simply. "You have made me. And, as I say, I'll need to live, I suppose, till I get going for myself."

His father winced again. Then suddenly burst out:

"D'you think for a minute that that society

girl will stand for your getting a job and trying to support her on your wages?"

"She will if she loves me."

"You poor ninny!" burst out I. Tapp. "You've got about as much idea of women as you have of business. And where are you going to work?"

"Well," and Lawford smiled a little whimsically, serious though the discussion was, "I've always felt a leaning toward the candy business. I believe I have a natural adaptability for that. Couldn't I find a job in one of your factories, dad?"

"You'll get no leg-up from me, unless you show you're worthy of it."

"But you'll give me a job?"

"I won't interfere if the superintendent of any of the factories takes you on," growled I. Tapp. "But mind you, he'll hire you on his own responsibility—he'll understand that from me. But I tell you right now this is no time to apply for a job in a candy factory. We're discharging men—not hiring them."

"I will apply for the first opening," announced the son.

I. Tapp stamped away along the graveled walk, leaving the young man alone. Lawford's calmness was as irritating to him as sea water to a raw wound.

CHAPTER XXIV

GRAY DAYS

THOSE days were dark for Louise Grayling; on her shoulders she bore double trouble. Anxiety for her father's safety made her sufficiently unhappy; but in addition her mind must cope with the mystery of Cap'n Amazon's identity and Cap'n Abe's whereabouts.

For she was not at all satisfied in her heart that the storekeeper had sailed from the port of Boston on the *Curlew;* and the status of the piratical looking Amazon Silt was by no means decided to her satisfaction. Her discoveries in his bedroom had quite convinced the young woman that Cap'n Amazon was in masquerade.

His comforting words and his thoughtfulness touched her so deeply, however, that she could not quarrel with the old man; and his insistence that Cap'n Abe had sailed on the *Curlew* and would be at hand to assist Professor Grayling if the schooner had been wrecked was kindly meant, she knew. He scoffed at the return of Cap'n Abe's chest as being of moment; he refused to discuss his brother's

reason for stuffing the old chest with such useless lumber as it contained.

"Leave Abe for knowing his own business, Niece Louise. 'Tain't any of our consarn," was the most he would say about that puzzling circumstance.

Louise watched the piratical figure of Cap'n Amazon shuffling around the store or puttering about certain duties of housekeeping that he insisted upon doing himself, with a wonder that never waned.

His household habits were those which she supposed Cap'n Abe to have had. She wondered if all sailors were as neat and as fussy as he. He still insisted upon doing much of the cooking; it was true that he had good reason to doubt Betty Gallup's ability to cook.

When there were no customers in the store Louise often sat there with Cap'n Amazon, with either a book or her sewing in her hand. Sometimes they would not speak for an hour, while the substitute storekeeper "made up the books," which was a serious task for him.

He seemed normally dexterous in everything else, but he wrote with his left hand—an angular, upright chirography which, Louise thought, showed unmistakably that he was unfamiliar with the use of the pen. "Writing up the log" he called this clerkly task, and his awkward looking characters

in the ledger were in great contrast to Cap'n Abe's round, flowing hand.

For several days following the discovery in the "*Globe* paper" of the notice about the *Curlew,* Louise Grayling and Cap'n Amazon lived a most intimate existence. She would not allow Betty Gallup to criticise the captain even slightly within her hearing.

They received news from New York which was no news at all. The Boston Chamber of Commerce had heard no further word of the schooner. Louise and the captain could only hope.

The world of seafaring is so filled with mysteries like this of the *Curlew,* that Louise knew well that no further word might ever be received of the vessel.

Cap'n Amazon rang the changes daily—almost hourly—upon sea escapes and rescues. He related dozens of tales (of course with the personal note in most), showing how ships' companies had escaped the threat of disaster in marvelous and almost unbelievable ways.

Louise had not the heart now to stop this flow of narrative by telling him bluntly that she doubted the authenticity of his tales. Nor would she look into the old books again to search out the originals of the stories which flowed so glibly from his lips.

Who and what he could really be puzzled Louise quite as much as before; yet she had not the heart

to probe the mystery with either question or personal scrutiny. The uncertainty regarding the *Curlew* and those on board filled so much of the girl's thought that little else disturbed her.

Save one thing. She desired to see Lawford Tapp and talk with him. But Lawford did not appear at the store on the Shell Road.

Mr. Bane came frequently to call. He was an eager listener to Cap'n Amazon's stories and evidently enjoyed the master mariner hugely. Several of the young people from the cottages along The Beaches called on Louise; but if the girl desired to see Aunt Euphemia she had to go to the Perritons, or meet the Lady from Poughkeepsie in her walks along the sands. Aunt Euphemia could not countenance Cap'n Amazon in the smallest particular.

"It is a mystery to me, Louise—a perfect mystery—how you are able to endure that awful creature and his coarse stories. That dreadful tale of the albatross sticks in my mind—I cannot forget it," she complained. "And his appearance! No more savage looking man did I ever behold. I wonder you are not afraid to live in the same house with him."

Louise would not acknowledge that she had ever been fearful of Cap'n Amazon. Her own qualms of terror had almost immediately subsided. The news from the *Curlew,* indeed, seemed to have

smothered the neighborhood criticism of the captain, if all suspicions had not actually been lulled to rest.

Cap'n Amazon spoke no more of his brother, save in connection with Professor Grayling's peril, than he had before. He seemed to have no fears for Cap'n Abe. "Abe can look out for himself," was a frequent expression with him. But Cap'n Amazon never spoke as though he held the danger of Louise's father in light regard.

"I'll give 'em a fortnight to be heard from," Cap'n Joab Beecher said confidently. "Then if ye don't hear from Cap'n Abe, or the noospapers don't print nothin' more about the schooner, I shall write her down in the log as lost with all hands."

"Don't you be too sartain sure 'bout it," growled Cap'n Amazon. "There's many a wonder of the sea, as you an' I know, Joab Beecher. Look at what happened the crew of the *Mailfast,* clipper built, out o' Baltimore—an' that was when you an' I, Cap'n Joab, was sharpenin' our milk teeth on salt hoss."

"What happened her, Cap'n Am'zon?" queried Milt Baker, reaching for a fresh piece of Brown Mule, and with a wink at the other idlers. "Did she go down, or did she go up?"

"Both," replied Cap'n Amazon unruffled. "She went up in smoke *an'* flame, an' finally sunk when she'd burned to the Plimsol mark.

"Every man of the crew and afterguard got safely into two boats. This wasn't far to the westward of Fayal—in mebbe somewhere near the same spot where that Portugee fisherman reports pickin' up the *Curlew's* boat.

"When the *Mailfast* burned the sea was calm; but in six hours a sudden gale came up and drove the two boats into the southwest. They wasn't provisioned or watered for a long v'y'ge, and they had to run for it a full week, ev'ry mile reeled off takin' them further an' further from the islands, and further and further off the reg'lar course of shipping."

"Where'd they wind up at, Cap'n Am'zon?" asked Milt.

"Couldn't hit nothin' nearer'n the Guineas on that course," growled Cap'n Joab.

"There you're wrong," the substitute storekeeper said. "They struck seaweed—acres an' acres of it—square miles of it—everlastin' seaweed!"

"Sargasso Sea!" exploded Washy Gallup, wagging his toothless jaw. "I swanny!"

"I've heard about that place, but never seen it," said Cap'n Joab.

"And you don't want to," declared the narrator of the incident. "It ain't a place into which no sailorman wants to venture. The *Mailfast's* comp'ny—so 'tis said—was driven far into the pulpy, grassy sea. The miles of weed wrapped 'em

around like a blanket. They couldn't row because the weed fouled the oars; and they couldn't sail 'cause the weed was so heavy. But there's a drift they say, or a suction, or something that gradually draws a boat toward the middle of the field."

"Then, by golly!" exclaimed Milt Baker, "how in tarnation did they git aout? I sh'd think anybody that every drifted into the Sargasso Sea would be there yit."

"P'r'aps many a ship an' many a ship's comp'ny *have* found their grave there," said Cap'n Amazon solemnly. "'Tis called the graveyard of derelicts. But there's the chance of counter-storms. Before the two boats from the *Mailfast* were sucked down, and 'fore the crew was fair starved, a sudden shift of wind broke up the seaweed field and they escaped and were picked up.

"The danger of the Sargasso threatens all sailin' ships in them seas. Steam vessels have a better chance; but many a craft that's turned up missin' has undoubtedly been swallowed by the Sargasso."

Louise, who heard this discussion from the doorway of the store, could not fail to be impressed by it. Could the *Curlew,* with her father and Cap'n Abe aboard, have suffered such a fate? There was an element of probability in this tale of Cap'n Amazon's that entangled the girl's fancy. How-

ever, the idea colored the old man's further imagination in another way.

"Sargasso Sea," he said reflectively, between puffs of his pipe, after the idlers had left the store. "Yes, 'tis a fact, Niece Louise. That's what Abe drifted in for years—a mort of seaweed and pulp."

"What *do* you mean, Uncle Amazon?" gasped the girl, shocked by his words.

"This," the master mariner said, with a wide sweep of his arm taking in the cluttered store. "This was Abe's Sargasso Sea—and it come nigh to smotherin' him and bearin' him down by the head."

"Oh! you mean his life was so confined here?"

Cap'n Amazon nodded. "I wonder he bore it so long."

"I am afraid Uncle Abram is getting all he wants of adventure now," Louise said doubtfully.

Cap'n Amazon stared at her unwinkingly for a minute. Then all he said was:

"I wonder?"

CHAPTER XXV

AUNT EUPHEMIA MAKES A POINT

LAWFORD TAPP did not appear at the store and Louise continued to wonder about it; but she shrank from asking Betty Gallup, who might have been able to inform her why the young man did not come again. However, on one bright morning the gray roadster stopped before the door and Louise, from her window, saw that the three Tapp girls were in the car.

She thought they had come to make purchases, for the store on the Shell Road was often a port of call for the automobiles of the summer colonists. Suddenly, however, she realized that L'Enfant Terrible was standing up in the driver's seat and beckoning to her.

"Oh, Miss Grayling!" shrilled Cecile. "May I come up? I want to speak to you."

"No," commanded Prue firmly, preparing to step out of the car. "I will speak to Miss Grayling myself."

"I don't see why she can't come down," drawled Marian, the languid. "*I* have a message for her."

"Why!" ejaculated the surprised Louise, "if

you all wish to see me I'd better come down, hadn't I?" and she left the window at once.

She had remarked on the few occasions during the last few days that she had met the Tapp sisters on the beach, that they had seemed desirous of being polite to her—very different from their original attitude; but so greatly taken up had Louise's mind been with more important matters that she had really considered this change but little.

Therefore it was with some curiosity that she descended the stairs and went around by the yard gate to the side of the automobile.

"Dear Miss Grayling," drawled Marian, putting out a gloved hand. "Pardon the informality. But mother wants to know if you will help us pour tea at our lawn fête and dance Friday week? It would be so nice of you."

Louise smiled quietly. But she was not a stickler for social proprieties; so, although she knew the invitation savored of that "rawness" of which her aunt had remarked, she was inclined to meet Lawford's family halfway. She said:

"If you really want me I shall be glad to do what I can to make your affair a success. Tell your mother I will come—and thank you."

"So kind of you," drawled Marian.

But Cecile was not minded to let the interview end so tamely—or so suddenly.

"Say!" she exclaimed, "did Ford see you, Miss Grayling, before he went away?"

"He has gone away, then?" Louise repeated, and she could not keep the color from flooding into her cheeks.

"He wanted to see you, I'm sure," Cecile said bluntly. "But he started off in a hurry. Had a dickens of a row with dad."

"Cecile!" admonished Prue. "That sounds worse than it is."

Louise looked at her curiously, though she did not ask a question.

"Well, they did have a shindy," repeated L'Enfant Terrible. "When daddy gets on his high horse——"

"Ford wished to see you before he went away, Miss Grayling," broke in Prue, with an admonitory glare at her young sister. "He told us he was so confused that day he fell overboard from the *Merry Andrew,* that he did not even thank you for fishing him out of the sea. It was awfully brave of you."

"Bully, *I* say!" cried Cecile.

"Really heroic," added Marian. "Mother will never get over talking about it."

"Oh! I wish you wouldn't," murmured Louise. "I'm glad Betty and I saved him. Mrs. Gallup did quite as much as I——"

"We know all that," Prue broke in quickly. "And daddy's made it up to *her.*"

"Yes. I know. He was very liberal," Louise agreed.

"But mercy!" cried Prue. He can't send *you* a check, Miss Grayling. And we all do feel deeply grateful to you. Ford is an awfully good sort of a chap—for a brother."

Louise laughed outright at that. "I suppose, though never having had a brother, I can appreciate his good qualities fully as much as you girls," she said. "Will he be long away?"

"That we don't know," Marian said slowly. Louise had asked the question so lightly that Miss Tapp could not be sure there was any real interest behind it. But Cecile, who had alighted to crank up, whispered to Louise:

"You know what he's gone away for? No? To get a job! He and father have disagreed dreadfully."

"Oh! I am so sorry," murmured Louise. She would not ask any further questions. She was troubled, however, by this information, for L'Enfant Terrible seemed to have said it significantly. Louise wondered very much what had caused the quarrel between Lawford and his father.

She got at the heart of this mystery when she appeared at the lawn fête to help the Tapp girls and their mother entertain. She was introduced at that time to the Taffy King. Louise thought him rather

a funny little man, and his excitability vastly amused her.

She caught him staring at her and scowling more than once; so, in her direct way, she asked him what he meant by it.

"Don't you approve at all of me, Mr. Tapp?" she asked, presenting him with a cup of tea that he did not want.

"Ha! Beg pardon!" ejaculated the candy manufacturer. "Did you think I was watching you?"

"I *know* you were," she rejoined. "And your disapproval is marked. Tell me my faults. Of course, I sha'n't like you if you do; but I am curious."

"Huh! I'd like to see what that son of mine sees in you, Miss Grayling," he blurted out.

"Does he see anything particular in me?" Louise queried, her color rising, but with a twinkle in her eye.

"He's crazy about you," said I. Tapp.

"Oh! Is *that* why you and he disagreed?"

"It's going to cost him his home and his patrimony," the candy manufacturer declared fiercely. "I won't have it, I tell you! I've other plans for him. He's got to do as I say, or——"

Something in the girl's face halted him at the very beginning of one of his tirades. Positively she was laughing at him!

"Is *that* the reef on which you and Lawford have struck?" Louise asked gently. "If he chooses to address attentions to me he must become self-supporting?"

"I'll cut him off without a cent if he marries you!" threatened I. Tapp.

"Why," murmured Louise, "then that will be the making of him, I have no doubt. It is the lack I have seen in his character from the beginning. Responsibility will make a man of him."

"Ha!" snarled I. Tapp. "How about *you?* Will you marry a poor man—a chap like my son who, if he ever makes twenty dollars a week, will be doing mighty well?"

"Oh! This is so—so sudden, Mr. Tapp!" murmured Louise, dimpling. "You are not seriously asking me to marry your son, are you?"

"Asking you to?" exploded the excitable Taffy King, with a wild gesture. "I forbid it! Forbid it! do you hear?" and he rushed away from the scene of the festivities and did not appear again during the afternoon.

Mrs. Tapp, all of a flutter, appeared at Louise's elbow.

"Oh, dear, Miss Grayling! What *did* he say? He is so excitable." She almost wept. "I hope he has said nothing to offend you?"

Louise looked at her with a rather pitying smile.

"Don't be worried, Mrs. Tapp," she assured her. "Really, I think your husband is awfully amusing."

Naturally disapproval was plainly enthroned upon Aunt Euphemia's countenance when she saw her niece aiding in the entertainment of the guests at the Tapp lawn fête. The Lady from Poughkeepsie had come with the Perritons because, as she admitted, the candy manufacturer's family must be placated to a degree.

"But you go too far, Louise. Even good nature cannot excuse this. I am only thankful that young man is not at home. Surely you cannot be really interested in Lawford Tapp?"

"Do spare my blushes," begged Louise, her palms upon her cheeks but her eyes dancing. "Really, I haven't seen Lawford for days."

"Really, Louise?"

"Surely I would not deceive you, auntie," she said. "He may have lost all his interest in me, too. He went away without bidding me good-bye."

"Well, I am glad of that!" sighed Aunt Euphemia. "I feared it was different. Indeed, I heard something said—— Oh, well, people will gossip so! Never mind. But these Tapps are *so* pushing."

"I think Mrs. Tapp is a very pleasant woman; and the girls are quite nice," Louise said demurely.

"You need not have displayed your liking for them in quite this way," objected Aunt Euphemia.

"You could easily have excused yourself—the uncertainty about your poor father would have been reason enough. I don't know—I am not sure, indeed, but that we should go into mourning. Of course, it would spoil the summer——"

"Oh! Aunt Euphemia!"

"Yes. Well, I only mentioned it. For my own part I look extremely well in crêpe."

Louise was shocked by this speech; yet she knew that its apparent heartlessness did not really denote the state of her aunt's mind. It was merely bred of the lady's shallowness, and of her utterly self-centered existence.

That evening, long after supper and after the store lights were out, and while Cap'n Amazon and Louise were sitting as usual in the room behind the store, a hasty step on the porch and a rat-tat-tat upon the side door announced a caller than whom none could have been more unexpected.

"Aunt Euphemia!" cried Louise, when the master mariner ushered the lady in. "What has happened?"

"Haven't you heard? Did you not get a letter?" demanded Mrs. Conroth. But she kept a suspicious eye on the captain.

"From daddy-prof?" exclaimed Louise, jumping up.

"Yes. Mailed at Gibraltar. Nothing has happened to that vessel he is on. That was all a

ridiculous story. But there is something else, Louise."

"Sit down, ma'am," Cap'n Amazon was saying politely. "Do sit down, ma'am."

"Not in this house," declared the lady, with finality. "I do not feel safe here. And it's not safe for you to be here, Louise, with this—this man. You don't know who he is; nobody knows who he is. I have just heard all about it from one of the—er—natives. Mr. Abram Silt never had a brother that anybody in Cardhaven ever saw. There is no Captain Amazon Silt—and never was!"

"Oh!" gasped Louise.

"Nor does your father say a word in his letter to me about Abram Silt being with him aboard that vessel, the *Curlew*. Nobody knows what has become of your uncle—the man who really owns this store. How do we know but that this—this creature," concluded Aunt Euphemia, with dramatic gesture, "has made away with Mr. Silt and taken over his property?"

"It 'ud be jest like the old pirate!" croaked a harsh voice from the kitchen doorway, and Betty Gallup appeared, apparently ready to back up Mrs. Conroth physically, as well as otherwise.

CHAPTER XXVI

AT LAST

THAT hour in the old-fashioned living-room behind Cap'n Abe's store was destined to be marked indelibly upon Louise Grayling's memory. Aunt Euphemia and Betty Gallup had both come armed for the fray. They literally swept Louise off her feet by their vehemence.

The effect of the challenge on Cap'n Amazon was most puzzling. As Mrs. Conroth refused to sit down—she could talk better standing, becoming quite oracular, in fact—the captain could not, in politeness, take his customary chair. And he had discarded his pipe upon going to the door to let the visitor in.

Therefore, it seemed to Louise, the doughty captain seemed rather lost. It was not that he displayed either surprise or fear because of Aunt Euphemia's accusation. Merely he did not know what to do with himself during her exhortation.

The fact that he was taxed with a crime—a double crime, indeed—did not seem to bother him at all. But the clatter of the women's tongues seemed to annoy him.

His silence and his calmness affected Mrs. Conroth and Betty Gallup much as the store idlers had been affected when they tried to bait him—their exasperation increased. Cap'n Amazon's utter disregard of what they said (for Betty did her share of the talking, relieving the Lady from Poughkeepsie when she was breathless) continued unabated. It was a situation that, at another time, would have vastly amused Louise.

But it was really a serious matter. Mrs. Conroth was quite as excited as Betty. Both became vociferous in acclaiming the captain's irresponsibility, and both accused him of having caused Cap'n Abe's disappearance.

"Mark my word," declared Aunt Euphemia, with her most indignant air, "that creature is guilty—guilty of an awful crime!"

"The old pirate! That he is!" reiterated Betty.

"Louise, my child, come away from here at once. This is no place for a young woman—or for any self-respecting person. Come."

For the first time since the opening of this scene Cap'n Amazon displayed trouble. He turned to look at Louise, and she thought his countenance expressed apprehension—as though he feared she might go.

"Come!" commanded Mrs. Conroth again. "This is no fit place for you; it never *has* been fit!"

"Avast, there, ma'am!" growled the captain, at last stung to retort.

"You are an old villain!" declared Aunt Euphemia.

"He's an old pirate!" concluded Betty Gallup.

Here Louise found her voice—and she spoke with decision.

"I shall stay just the same, aunt. I am satisfied that you all misjudge Captain Amazon." His face—the sudden flash of gratitude in it—thanked her.

"Louise!" cried her aunt.

"You better come away, Miss Lou," said Betty. "The constable'll git that old pirate; that's what'll happen to him."

"Stop!" exclaimed Louise. "I'll listen to no more. I do not believe these things you say. And neither of you can prove them. I'm going to bed. Good-night, Aunt Euphemia," and she marched out of the room.

That closed the discussion. Cap'n Amazon bowed Mrs. Conroth politely out of the door and Betty went with her. Louise did not get to sleep in her chamber overhead for hours; nor did she hear the captain come upstairs at all.

In the morning's post there was a letter for Louise from her father—a letter that had been delayed. It had been mailed at the same time the one to Aunt Euphemia was sent. The *Curlew* would soon turn her bows Bostonward, the voyage having been successful from a scientific point of view. Professor Grayling even mentioned the loss of a small boat in

a squall, when it had been cast adrift from the taffrail by accident.

Betty, with face like a thundercloud, had brought the letter up to Louise. When the girl had hastily read it through she ran down to show it to Cap'n Amazon. She found him reading an epistle of his own, while Cap'n Joab, Milt Baker, Washy Gallup, and several other neighbors hovered near.

"Yep. I got one myself," announced Cap'n Amazon.

"Oh, captain!"

"Yep. From Abe. Good reason why your father didn't speak of Abe in his letter to your a'nt. Didn't in yours, did he?"

Louise shook her head.

"No? Listen here," Cap'n Amazon said. "'I haven't spoke to Professor Grayling. He don't know Abe Silt from the jib-boom. Why should he? I am a foremast hand and he lives abaft. But he is a fine man. Everybody says so. We've had some squally weather——'

"Well! that's nothin'. Ahem!"

He went on, reading bits to the interested listeners now and then, and finally handed the letter to Cap'n Joab Beecher. The latter, looking mighty queer indeed, adjusted his spectacles and spread out the sheet.

"Ye-as," he admitted cautiously. "That 'pears to be Cap'n Abe's handwritin', sure 'nough."

"Course 'tis!" squealed Washy Gallup. "As plain, as plain!"

"Read it out," urged Milt while the captain went to wait upon a customer.

Louise listened with something besides curiosity. The letter was a rambling account of the voyage of the *Curlew,* telling little directly or exactly about the daily occurrences; but nothing in it conflicted with what Professor Grayling had written Louise—save one thing.

The girl realized that the arrival of this letter from Cap'n Abe had finally punctured that bubble of suspicion against the captain that had been blown overnight. It seemed certain and unshakable proof that the substitute storekeeper was just whom he claimed to be, and it once and for all put to death the idea that Cap'n Abe had not gone to sea in the *Curlew.*

Yet Louise had never been more puzzled since first suspicion had been roused against Cap'n Amazon. A single sentence in her father's letter could not be made to jibe with Cap'n Abe's epistle, and therefore she folded up her own letter and thrust it into her pocket. In speaking of his companions on shipboard, the professor had written:

"I am by far the oldest person aboard the *Curlew,* skipper included. They are all young fellows, both for'ard and in the afterguard. Yet they treat me

like one of themselves and I am having a most enjoyable time."

Cap'n Abe was surely much older than her daddy-prof! It puzzled her. It troubled her. There was not a moment of that day when it was not the uppermost thought in her mind.

People came in from all around to read Cap'n Abe's letter and to congratulate Cap'n Amazon and Louise that the *Curlew* was safe. The captain took the matter as coolly as he did everything else.

Louise watched him, trying to fathom his manner and the mystery about him. Yet, when the solution of the problem was developed, she was most amazed by the manner in which her eyes were opened.

Supper time was approaching, and the cooler evening breeze blew in through the living-room windows. Relieved for the moment from his store tasks, Cap'n Amazon appeared, rubbing his hands cheerfully, and briskly approached old Jerry's cage as he chirruped to the bird.

"Well! well! And how's old Jerry been to-day?" Louise heard him say. Then: "Hi-mighty! What's this?"

Louise glanced in from the kitchen. She saw him standing before the cage, his chin sunk on his breast, the tears trickling down his mahogany face.

That hard, stern visage, with its sweeping pirati-

cal mustache and the red bandana above it, was a most amazing picture of grief.

"Oh! What is it?" cried the girl, springing to his side.

He pointed with shaking index finger to the bird within the cage.

"Dead!" he said brokenly. "Dead, Niece Louise! Poor old Jerry's dead—and him and me shipmates for so many, many years."

"Oh!" screamed the girl, grasping his arm. "*You are Cap'n Abe!*"

CHAPTER XXVII

SARGASSO

AFTER all, when she considered it later, Louise wondered only that she had not seen through the masquerade long before.

From the beginning—the very first night of her occupancy of the pleasant chamber over the store on the Shell Road—she should have understood the mystery that had had the whole neighborhood by the ears during the summer.

She, more than anybody else, should have seen through Cap'n Abe's masquerade. Louise had been in a position, she now realized, to have appreciated the truth.

"You are Cap'n Abe," she told him, and he did not deny it. Sadly he looked at the dead canary in the bottom of the cage, and wiped his eyes.

"Poor Jerry!" her uncle said, and in that single phrase all the outer husk of the rough and ready seaman—the character he had assumed in playing his part for so many weeks—sloughed away. He was the simple, tender-hearted, almost childish Cap'n Abe that she had met upon first coming to Cardhaven.

Swiftly through her mind the incidents of that first night and morning flashed. She remembered that he had prepared her—as he had prepared his neighbors—for the coming of this wonderful Cap'n Amazon, whose adventures he had related and whose praises he had sung for so many years.

Cap'n Abe had taken advantage of Perry Baker's coming with Louise's trunk to send off his own chest, supposedly filled with the clothes he would need on a sea voyage.

Then, the house clear of the expressman and Louise safe in bed, the storekeeper had proceeded to disguise himself as he had long planned to do.

Not content with the shaving of his beard only, he had dyed his hair and the sweeping piratical mustache left him. Walnut juice applied to his face and body had given him the stain of a tropical sun. Of course, this stain and the dye had to be occasionally renewed.

The addition of gold rings in his ears (long before pierced for the purpose, of course) and the wearing of the colored handkerchief to cover his bald crown completed a disguise that his own mother would have found hard to penetrate.

Cap'n Abe was gone; Cap'n Amazon stood in his place.

To befool his niece was a small matter. At daybreak he had come to her door and bidden Louise good-bye. But she had not seen him—only his fig-

ure as he walked up the road in the fog. Cap'n Abe had, of course, quickly made a circuit and come back to re-enter the house by the rear door.

From that time—or from the moment Lawford Tapp had first seen him on the store porch that morning—the storekeeper had played a huge game of bluff. And what a game it had been!

In his character of Cap'n Amazon he had commanded the respect—even the fear—of men who for years had considered Cap'n Abe a butt for their poor jests. It was marvelous, Louise thought, when one came to think of it.

And yet, not so marvelous after all, when she learned all that lay behind the masquerade. There had always been, lying dormant in Cap'n Abe's nature, characteristics that had never before found expression.

Much she learned on this evening at supper, and afterward when the store had been closed and they were alone in the living-room. Diddimus, who still had his doubts of the piratical looking captain, lay in Louise's lap and purred loudly under the ministration of her gentle hand, while Cap'n Abe talked.

It was a story that brought to the eyes of the sympathetic girl the sting of tears as well as bubbling laughter to her lips. And in it all she found something almost heroic as well as ridiculous.

"My mother marked me," said Cap'n Abe. "Poor mother! I was born with her awful horror

of the ravenin' sea as she saw the *Bravo* an' Cap'n Josh go down. I knew it soon—when I was only a little child. I knew I was set apart from other Silts, who had all been seafarin' men since the beginnin' of time.

"And yet I loved the sea, Niece Louise. The magic of it, its mystery, its romance and its wonders; all phases of the sea and seafarin' charmed me. But I could not step foot in a boat without almost swoonin' with fright, and the sight of the sea in its might filled me with terror.

"Ah, me! You can have no idea what pains I suffered as a boy because of this fear," said Cap'n Abe. "I dreamed of voyagin' into unknown seas—of seein' the islands of the West and of the East—of visitin' all the wonderful corners of the world—of facin' all the perils and experiencin' all the adventures of a free rover. And what was my fate?

"The tamest sort of a life," he said, answering his own question. "The flattest existence ever man could imagine. Hi-mighty! Instead of a sea rover—a storekeeper! Instead of romance—Sargasso!" and he gestured with his pipe in his hand. "You understand, Louise? That's what I meant when I spoke of the Sargasso Sea t'other day. It was my doom to live in the tideless and almost motionless Sea of Sargasso.

"But my mind didn't stay tame ashore," pursued

Cap'n Abe. "As a boy I fed it upon all the romances of the sea I could gather. Ye-as. I suppose I am greatly to be blamed. I have been a hi-mighty liar, Louise!

"It began because I heard so many other men tellin' of their adventoors, an' I couldn't tell of none. My store at Rocky Head where I lived all my life till I come here (mother came over to Cardhaven with her second husband; but I stayed on there till twenty-odd year ago)—my store there was like this one. There's allus a lot of old barnacles like Cap'n Joab and Washy Gallup clingin' to such reefs as this.

"So I heard unendin' experiences of men who *had* gone to sea. And at night I read everything I could get touchin' on, an' appertainin' to, seafarin'. In my mind I've sailed the seven seas, charted unknown waters, went through all the perils I tell 'bout. Yes, sir, I don't dispute I'm a hi-mighty liar," he repeated, sighing and shaking his head.

"But when I come here to the Shell Road, where there warn't nobody knowed me, it struck me forcible," pursued Cap'n Abe, "that my fambly bein' so little known I could achieve a sort of vicarious repertation as a seagoin' man.

"Ye see what I mean? I cal'lated if I'd had a brother—a brother who warn't marked with a fear of the ocean—*he* would ha' been a sailor. Course he would! All us Silts was seafarin' men!

"An' I thought so much 'bout this brother that I *might* ha' had, and what he would ha' done sailin' up an' down the world, learnin' to be a master mariner, an' finally pacin' his own quarter-deck, that he grew like he was real to me, Niece Louise—he re'lly did. I give him a name. 'Am'zon' has been a name in our fambly since Cap'n Reba Silt first put the nose of his old *Tigris* to the tidal wave of the Am'zon River—back in seventeen-forty. He come home to New Bedford and named his first boy, that was waitin' to be christened, 'Am'zon Silt.'

"So I called this—this dream brother of mine—'Am'zon.' These Cardhaven folks warn't likely to know whether I had a brother or not. And I made up he went to sea when he was twelve—like I told ye, my dear. Ye-as. I did hate to lie to ye, an' you just new-come here. But I'd laid my plans for a long while back just to walk out, as it were, an' let these fellers 'round here have a taste o' Cap'n Am'zon Silt that they'd begun to doubt was ever comin' to Cardhaven. An' hi-mighty!" exploded Cap'n Abe, with a great laugh, "I *have* give 'em a taste of him, I vum!"

"Oh, you have, Uncle Abram! You have!" agreed Louise, and burst into laughter herself. "It is wonderful how you did it! It is marvelous! How *could* you?"

"Nothin' easier, when you come to think on't," replied Cap'n Abe. "I'd talked so much 'bout Cap'n

Am'zon that he was a fixed idea in people's minds. I said when he come I'd go off on a v'y'ge. I'd fixed ev'rything proper for the exchange when you lit down on me, Niece Louise. Hi-mighty!" grinned Cap'n Abe, "at first I thought sure you'd spilled the beans."

Louise rippled another appreciative laugh. "Oh, dear!" she cried, clapping her hands together. "It's too funny for anything! How you startled Betty! Why, even Lawford Tapp was amazed at your appearance. You—you *do* look like an old pirate, Uncle Abram."

"Don't I?" responded Cap'n Abe, childishly delighted.

"That awful scar along your jaw—and you so brown," said the girl. "How did you get that scar, Uncle Abram?"

"Fallin' down the cellar steps when I was a kid," said the storekeeper. "But these fellers think I must ha' got it through a cutlass stroke, or somethin'. Oh, I guess I've showed 'em what a real Silt should look like. Yes, sir! I cal'late I look the part of a feller that's roved the sea for sixty year or so, Niece Louise."

"You do, indeed. That red bandana—and the earrings—and the mustache—and stain. Why, uncle! even to that tattooing——"

He looked down at his bared arm and nodded proudly.

"Ye-as. That time I went away ten year ago and left Joab to run the store (and a proper mess he made of things!) I found a feller down in the South End of Boston and he fixed me up with this tattoo work for twenty-five dollars. Course, I didn't dare show it none here—kep' my sleeves down an' my throat-latch buttoned all winds and weathers. But now——"

He laughed again, full-throated and joyous like a boy. Then, suddenly, he grew grave.

"Niece Louise, I wonder if you can have any idea what this here dead-and-alive life all these years has meant to me? Lashed hard and fast to this here store, and to a stay-ashore life, when my heart an' soul was longin' to set a course for 'way across't the world? Sargasso—that's it. This was my Sargasso Sea—and I was smothered in it!"

"I think I understand, Cap'n Abe," the girl said softly, laying her hand in his big palm.

"An' now, Louise, that I've got a taste of romance, I don't want to come back to humdrum things —no, sir! I want to keep right on bein' Cap'n Am'zon, and havin' even them old hardshells like Cap'n Joab and Washy Gallup look on me as a feller-salt."

"But how——?"

"They never re'lly respected Cap'n Abe," her uncle hurried on to say. "I find my neighbors *did* love him, an' I thank God for that! But they knew

he warn't no seaman, and a man without salt water in his blood don't make good with Cardhaven folks.

"But Cap'n Am'zon—he's another critter entirely. They mebbe think he's an old pirate or the like," and he chuckled again, "but they sartin sure respect him. Even Bet Gallup fears Cap'n Am'zon; but, to tell ye the truth, Niece Louise, she used to earwig Cap'n Abe!"

"But when the *Curlew* arrives home?" queried the girl suddenly.

"Hi-mighty, ye-as! I see *that,*" he groaned. "Looks to me as though somethin'll have to happen to Abe Silt 'twixt Boston and this port. And you'll have to stop your father's mouth, Louise. I depend upon you to help me. Otherwise I shall be undone—completely undone."

"Goodness!" cried the girl, choked with laughter again. "Do you mean to do away with Cap'n Abe? I fear you are quite as wicked as Betty Gallup believes you to be—and Aunt Euphemia."

He grinned broadly once more. "I got Cap'n Abe's will filed away already—if somethin' *should* happen," said the old intriguer. "Everything's fixed, Niece Louise."

"I'll help you," she declared, and gave him her hand a second time.

CHAPTER XXVIII

STORM CLOUDS THREATEN

THE next week Gusty Durgin made her début as a picture actress. She had pestered Mr. Bane morn, noon, and night at the hotel until finally the leading man obtained Mr. Anscomb's permission to work the buxom waitress into a picture.

"But nothin' funny, Mr. Bane," Gusty begged. "Land sakes! It's the easiest thing in the world to get a laugh out of a fat woman fallin' down a sand bank, or a fat man bein' busted in the face with a custard pie. I don't want folks to laugh at my fat. I want 'em to forget that I *am* fat."

"Do you know, Miss Grayling," said Bane, recounting this to Louise, "*that* is art. Gusty has the right idea. Many a floweret is born to blush unseen, the poet says. But can it be we have found in Gusty Durgin a screen artist in embryo?"

Louise was interested enough to go to the beach early to watch Gusty in a moving picture part.

"A real sad piece 'tis, too," the waitress confided to Louise. "I got to make up like a mother—old, you know, and real wrinkled. And when my daughter (she's Miss Noyes) is driv' away from home by her

father because she's done wrong, I got to take on like kildee 'bout it. It's awful touchin'. I jest cried about it ha'f the night when this Mr. Anscomb told me what I'd have to do in the picture.

"Land sakes! I can cry re'l tears with the best of 'em—you see if I can't, Miss Grayling. You ought to be a movie actress yourself. It don't seem just right that you ain't."

"But I fear I could not weep real tears," Louise said.

"No. Mebbe not. That's a gift, I guess," Gusty agreed. "There! I got to go now. He's callin' me. The boss's sister will have to wait on all the boarders for dinner to-day. An' my! ain't she sore! But if I'm a success in these pictures you can just believe the Cardhaven Inn won't see *me* passin' biscuits and clam chowder for long."

In the midst of the rehearsal Louise saw a figure striding along the shore from the direction of Tapp Point, and her heart leaped. Already there seemed to be a change in the appearance of Lawford.

His sisters, who came frequently to see Louise at Cap'n Abe's, had told her their brother was actually working in one of his father's factories. He had not even obtained a position in the office, but in the factory itself. He ran one of the taffy cut-

my pocket money for him—if he'll take it. I think daddy's real mean, and I've told him so. And when Dot Johnson comes I'm not going to treat her nice at all."

Lawford, however, did not look the part of the abused and disowned heir. He seemed brisker than Louise remembered his being before and his smile was as winning as ever.

"Miss Grayling!" he exclaimed, seizing both her hands.

"Lawford! I am *so* glad to see you," she rejoined frankly. And then she had to pull her hands away quickly and raise an admonitory finger. "Walk beside me—and be good," she commanded. "Do you realize that two worlds are watching us—the world of The Beaches and the movie world as well?"

"Hang 'em!" announced Lawford with emphasis, his eyes shining. "Think! I've never even thanked you for what you did for me that day. I thought Betty Gallup hauled me out of the sea till Jonas Crabbe at the lighthouse put me wise."

"Never mind that," she said. "Tell me, how do you like your work? And why are you at home again?"

"I'm down here for the week-end—to get some more of my duds, to tell the truth. I'm going to be a fixture at the Egypt factory—much to dad's surprise, I fancy."

"Do you like it?" she asked him, watching his face covertly.

"I hate it! But I can stick, just the same. I have a scheme for improving the taffy cutting machines, too. I think I've a streak in me for mechanics. I have always taken to engines and motors and other machinery."

"An inventor!"

"Yes. Why not?" he asked soberly. "Oh! I'm not going to be one of those inventors who let sharp business men cheat them out of their eye-teeth. If I improve that candy cutter it will cost I. Tapp real money, believe me!"

Louise's eyes danced at him in admiration and she dimpled. "I think you are splendid, Lawford!" she murmured.

It was a mean advantage to take of a young man. They were on the open beach and every eye from the lighthouse to Tapp Point might be watching them. Lawford groaned deeply—and looked it.

"Don't," she said. "I know it's because of me you have been driven to work."

"You know that, Miss Grayling? Louise!"

"Yes. I had a little talk with your father. He's *such* a funny man!"

"If you can find anything humorous about I. Tapp in his present mood you are a wonder!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Louise!" He could not keep his hungry gaze off her face.

"You're a nice boy, Lawford," she told him, nodding. "I liked you a lot from the very first. Now I admire you."

"Oh, Louise!"

"Don't look like that at me," she commanded. "They'll see you. And—and I feel as though I were about to be eaten."

"You will be," he said significantly. "I am coming to the store to-night. Or shall I go to see your aunt first?"

"You'd better keep away from Aunt Euphemia, Lawford," she replied, laughing gayly. "Wait till my daddy-prof comes home. See him."

"And you really love me? Do you? Please . . . dear!"

She nodded, pursing her lips.

"But eighteen dollars a week!" groaned Lawford. "I think the super would have made it an even twenty if it hadn't been for dad."

"Never mind," she told him, almost gayly. "Maybe the invention will make our fortune."

At that speech Lawford's cannibalistic tendencies were greatly and visibly increased. Louise was no coy and coquettish damsel without a thorough knowledge of her own heart. Having made up her mind that Lawford was the mate for her, and being confident that her father would approve of any choice she made, she was willing to let the young man know his good fortune.

Nor was Lawford the only person to learn her mind. Cap'n Abe said:

"Land sakes! you come 'way down here to the Cape to be took in by a feller like Ford Tapp, Niece Louise? I thought you was a girl with too much sense for that!"

"But what has love to do with sense, uncle?" she asked him, dimpling.

"Hi-mighty! I s'pect that's so. An', anyway, he does seem to improve. He's really gone to work, they tell me, in one of his father's candy factories."

"But that's the one thing about him I'm not sure I approve of," sighed Louise. "We could have so much better times if he and I could play along the shore this summer and not have to think about hateful money."

"My soul an' body!" gasped the storekeeper, as though she had spoken irreverently about sacred things. "Money ain't never hateful, Niece Louise."

On Sunday I. Tapp did not accompany his family to church at Paulmouth. Returning, the big car stopped before Cap'n Abe's store and Mrs. Tapp came in to call on Louise. The good woman hugged the girl and wept on her bosom.

And his father's so cross and unhappy that I have to cry for him, too."

Which seemed to prove that Mrs. Tapp was being kept in a moist state most of the time.

"But I know I. Tapp is sorry for what he's done. Only there's no use expectin' him to admit it, or that he'll change. If Fordy won't marry Dot Johnson I. Tapp will never forgive him. I don't know what I shall say to her when she does come."

"Maybe she will not appear at all," Louise suggested comfortingly.

"I don't know. I got a letter from her mother putting the visit off till later. But it can't be put off forever. Anyhow, when she comes Lawford says he won't be at home. I hope the girls will act nice to her."

"*I* will," Louise assured her. "And I'll make Mr. Tapp like me yet; you see if I don't."

"Oh, I can't hope for that much, my dear," sighed the lachrymose lady, shaking her head; but she kissed Louise again.

Lawford waved a hand to her at her chamber window early on Monday morning as L'Enfant Terrible drove him in the roadster to Paulmouth to catch the milk train. All the girls were proud of their brother because, as Cecile said, he was proving himself to be "such a perfectly good sport after all." And perhaps I. Tapp himself admired his son for the pluck he was showing.

They corresponded after that—Louise and Lawford. As she could not hope to hear from the *Curlew* again until the schooner made the port of Boston, Lawford's letters were the limit of her correspondence. Louise had always failed to make many close friends among women.

Her interests aside from those at the store and with the movie people were limited, too. The butterfly society of The Beaches did not much attract Louise Grayling.

Aunt Euphemia manifestly disapproved of her niece at every turn. The Lady from Poughkeepsie had remained on the Cape for the full season in the hope of breaking up the intimacy between Louise and Lawford Tapp. His absence, which she had believed so fortunate, soon proved to be merely provocative of her niece's interest in the heir of the Taffy King.

Nor could she wean Louise from association with the piratical looking mariner at Cap'n Abe's store. The girl utterly refused to be guided by the older woman in either of these particulars.

"You are a reckless, abandoned girl!" Aunt Euphemia declared. "I am sure, no matter what others may say, that awful sailor is no fit companion for you.

"And as for Lawford Tapp—— Why, his people are impossible, Louise. Wherever you have your establishment, if you marry him, his people, when

they visit you will have to be apologized for," the indignant woman continued.

"Let—me—see," murmured Louise. "How large an 'establishment' should you think, auntie, we could keep up on eighteen dollars a week?"

"Eighteen dollars a week!" exclaimed Aunt Euphemia, aghast.

"Yes. That is Lawford's present salary. Wages, I think they call it at the factory. He gets it in cash —in a pay envelope."

"Mercy, Louise! You are not in earnest?"

"Certainly. My young man is going to earn our living. If he marries me his father will cut him off with the proverbial shilling. I. Tapp has other matrimonial plans for Lawford."

"What?" gasped the horrified Mrs. Conroth. "He does not approve of *you?*"

"Too true, auntie. I have driven poor Lawford to work in a candy factory."

"That—that upstart!" exploded the lady. But she did not refer to Lawford.

It was evident that Aunt Euphemia saw nothing but the threat of storm clouds for her niece in the offing. Trouble, deep and black, seemed to her mind to be hovering upon the horizon of the future.

As it chanced, the weather about this time seemed to reflect Aunt Euphemia's mood. The summer had passed with but few brief tempests. Seldom had Louise seen any phase of the sea in its wrath.

September, however, is an uncertain month at best. For several days a threatening haze shrouded the distant sea line. The kildees fluttered and shrieked over the booming surf.

Washy Gallup, meeting Louise as she strolled on the beach, prognosticated:

"Shouldn't be surprised none, Miss Lou, if we had a spell of weather. Mebbe we'll have an airly equinoctooral. We sometimes do.

"*Then* ye'll hear the sea sing psalms, as the feller said, an' no mistake. Them there picture folks'll mebbe git a show at a re'l storm. That's what they been wishin' for—an' a wreck off shore. Land sakes! if they'd ever *seed* a ship go to pieces afore their very eyes they wouldn't ask for a second helpin'—no, ma'am!"

That evening threatening clouds rolled up from seaward and mantled the arch of the sky. The fishing boats ran to cover in the harbor before dark. The surf rumbled louder and louder along the shore.

And all night the sea mourned its dead over Gull

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SCAR

ANOTHER fishfly (or was it the same that had droned accompaniment to Cap'n Abe's story-telling upon a former occasion?) boomed against the dusty panes of the window while the fretful, sand-laden wind swept searchingly about the store on the Shell Road.

It was early afternoon; but a green and dreary light lay upon sea and land as dim as though the hour was that of sunset. In the silence punctuating the desultory conversation, the sharp *swish, swish* of the sand upon the panes almost drowned the complaint of the fishfly.

"We're going to have a humdinger of a gale," announced Milt Baker, the last to enter and bang the store door. "She's pullin' 'round into the no'th-east right now, and I tell Mandy she might's well make up her mind to my lyin' up tight an' dry for a while. Won't be no clams shipped from *these* flats to-morrow."

"High you'll likely be," agreed the storekeeper. "How *dry* ye'll be, Milt, remains to be seen."

"*In*-side, or *aout?*" chuckled Cap'n Joab, for

Milt Baker's failing was not hidden under a bushel.

Amiel hastened to toll attention away from his side partner. "This wind's driv' them picture folks to cover," he said. "They was makin' some fillums over there on the wreck of the *Goldrock,* that's laid out four year or so in Ham Cove——"

"Nearer five year," put in Cap'n Joab, a stickler for facts.

"You air right, cap'n," agreed Washy Gallup.

"Well," said Amiel, "four *or* five. The heave of her made ha'f of 'em sick, and that big actor man, Bane, got knocked off into the water an' 'twas more by good luck than good management he warn't drowned. I cal'late *he's* got enough."

"The gale that brought the *Goldrock* ashore had just such another beginning as this," Cap'n Joab said reflectively. "But she'd never been wrecked on a lee shore if her crew had acted right. They mutineed, you know."

"The sculpins!" ejaculated the storekeeper briskly. "Can't excuse that. Anything but a crew that'll turn on the afterguard that they've signed on for to obey!"

"That's right, Cap'n Am'zon," said Cap'n Joab. "Ye say a true word."

"An' for good reason," declared the mendacious storekeeper. "I've had experience with such sharks," and he ran his finger reflectively down the old scar upon his jaw.

"I always wanted to ask you 'bout that scar, Cap'n Am'zon," put in Milt Baker encouragingly. "Did you get it in a mutiny?"

"Yep."

"I didn't know but ye got it piratin'," chuckled Milt. "Bet Gallup, she swears you sailed under the Jolly Roger more'n once."

"So I did," declared the captain boldly. "This crew o' mutineers I speak of turned pirates, and they held me—the only one of the afterguard left alive—to navigate the ship.

"Guess mebbe you've heard tell, Cap'n Joab, of the mutiny of the *Galatea?*" went on the narrator unblushingly.

His fellow skipper nodded. "I've heard of it—yes. But you don't mean to say you sailed on *her,* Am'zon?"

"Yes, I did," the storekeeper declared. "I was third aboard her—she carried a full crew. She sailed out o' N'York for Australia and home by the way of the Chile ports and the Horn—a hermaphrodite brig she was; and—she—could—sail!

"But she warn't well found. The grub was wuss'n a Blue-nose herrin' smack's. Weevilly bread and rusty beef. The crew had a sayin' that the doc didn't have to call 'em to mess; the smell of it was sufficient.

"They was a hard crew I allow—them boys; many of 'em dock rats and the like. Warn't scurcely

half a dozen able seamen in the whole crew. the skipper and mate was master hard on 'em the South Atlantic we got some bad weather the crew was worked double tides, as you might

"The extry work on top o' the poor grub fin 'em," said the storekeeper. "One day in the mc watch the whole crew come boilin' aft and ca the skipper and the mate at breakfast. *They* well. The second was in his berth and I ha deck.

"I got knocked out first thing—there's the of it," and the captain put a finger again o mark along his jaw which actually was a men of contact with the cellar step when he was a "Belayin' pin. Knocked me inside out for day. But I cal'late they didn't put the steel t 'cause I'd been fairly decent to 'em comin' from N'York.

"Then, after the fight was over and they'd the others overboard, they begun to see they n me to navigate the *Galatea*. They give me the c of four inches of cold steel or actin' as naviga the bloody crew o' pirates!"

"And what did ye do?" demanded Amiel due, his mouth ajar.

"Well," snorted the storekeeper, "ye can

little Portugee traders an' smugglers. Then we h'isted the black flag and took our first prize—an English barque goin' down to Rio. It was me saved her crew's lives and give 'em a chance't in their longboat. They made Para all right, I heard afterward.

"We burned that barque," proceeded the storekeeper dreamily, "after we looted her of everything wuth while. Then——"

The door was flung open with a gust of wind behind it. A lanky, half-grown lad stuck his head in at the opening to shrill:

"Hi! ain't ye heard 'bout it?"

"'Bout what?" demanded Milt Baker.

"There's a schooner drivin' in on to the Gull Rocks," cried the news vender. "Somethin's gone wrong with her rudder, they say. She's goin' spang onto the reef. Ev'rybody's down there, an' the life-savers are comin' around from Wellriver with their gear."

"Gale out o' the no'theast, too!" exclaimed Cap'n Joab, starting for the door.

The story-teller saw his audience melt away in a minute. He went out on the porch. Fluttering across the fields and sand lots from all directions were the neighbors—both men and women. The possibility of a wreck—the great tragedy of longshore existence—would bring everybody not bedridden to the sands.

He saw Betty Gallup in high boots, her pea-coat buttoned tightly across her flat bosom, her man's hat pulled down over her ears, already halfway to the shore. From the cottage on the bluffs above The Beaches the summer visitors were trailing down. Below Bozewell's bungalow the motion picture company were running excitedly about.

"Like sandpipers," muttered the storekeeper. "Crazy critters. Wonder where that schooner is."

He hesitated to leave the premises. Cap'n Abe had never been known to follow the crowd to the beach when an endangered craft was in the offing. Indeed, he never looked in the direction of the sea if he could help it when a storm lashed its surface and piled the breakers high upon the strand.

But suddenly the man remembered that he was *not* Cap'n Abe! He stood here in an entirely different character. Cap'n Amazon, the rough and ready mariner, had little in common with the timid creature who had tamely kept store on the Shell Road for twenty-odd years.

What would the neighbors think of Cap'n Amazon if he remained away from the scene of excitement at such a time? He turned back into the store for his hat and coat and later came out and closed the door. Then he shuffled down the road.

At first he closed his eyes—squeezing the lids tight so as not to see the gale-ridden sea. But finally, stumbling, he opened them. Far away where the

pale tower of the lighthouse lifted staunchly against the greenish gray sky, the surf was rolling in from the open sea, the waves charging up the strand one after the other like huge white horses, their manes of spume tossed high by the breath of the gale. Black was the sea, and streaked angrily with foam.

Thunderously did it roar and break over the Gull Rocks. A curtain of spoondrift hung above that awful reef and almost shut from the view of those ashore the open sea and what swam on it.

The old storekeeper reached the sands below the Shell Road. Scattered in groups along the strand were the people of all classes and degrees brought together by the word that a vessel was in peril. Here a group of fishermen in guernseys and high boots, their sou'westers battened down upon their heads. Yonder Bane and his fellow actors in natty summer suits stood around the camera discussing with the director the possibility of making a film of the scene. Farther away huddled a party of women from the neighborhood, with shawls over their heads and children at their skirts. Beyond them the people from the cottages on the bluff were hurrying to the spot—women in silk attire and men in the lounge suits that fashion prescribed for afternoon wear.

The storekeeper saw and appreciated all this. He stood squarely up to the wind, the ends of the red bandana over his ears snapping in the rifted airs, and shaded his eyes with his hand. With his other

hand he stroked the scar along his jaw. He had a feeling that he had been cheated. That story of the mutiny of the *Galatea* was destined to be one of his very best narratives.

He had come to take great pride in these tales, had Cap'n Abe. He had heard enough men relate personal reminiscences to realize that his achievements in the story-telling line had a flavor all their own. He could hold his course with any of them, was his way of expressing it.

And here something had intervened to shut him off in the middle of a narrative. Cap'n Abe did not like it.

His keen vision swept the outlook once more. How darkly the clouds lowered! And the wind, spray-ridden down here on the open strand, cut shrewdly. It would be a wild night. Casually he thought of his cheerful living-room, with his chintz-cushioned rocker, Diddimus purring on the couch, and the lamplight streaming over all.

"Lucky chap, you, Abe Silt, after all," he muttered. "Lucky you ain't at sea in a blow like this."

It was just then that he saw the laboring schooner in the offing. Her poles were completely bare and by the way she pitched and tossed Cap'n Abe knew she must have two anchors out and that they were dragging.

She was so far away that she looked like a toy on the huge waves that rolled in from the horizon

line. Now and then a curling wave-crest hid even her topmasts. Again, the curtain of mist hanging above Gull Rocks shrouded her.

For the craft was being driven steadily upon the rocks. Unless the wind shifted—and that soon—she must batter her hull to bits upon the reef.

The storekeeper, who knew this coast and the weather conditions so well, saw at once that the schooner had no chance for salvation. When the wind backed around into the northeast, as it had on this occasion, it foreran a gale of more than usual power and of more than twenty-four hours' duration.

"She's doomed!" he whispered, and wagged his head sadly.

The might of the sea made him tremble. The thought of what was about to happen to the schooner —a fate that naught could avert—sickened him. Yet he walked on to join the nearest group of anxious watchers, the spray beating into that face which was strangely marred.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN THE STRONG TIDES LIFT

It was the tag-end of the season for the summer colony at The Beaches. Mrs. Conroth expected to leave the Perritons that evening—was leaving lingeringly, for she had desired to bear her niece off to New York with her. But on that point Louise had been firm.

"No, Aunt Euphemia," she had said. "I shall wait for daddy-prof and the *Curlew* to arrive at Boston. Then I shall either go there to meet him, or he will come here. I want him to meet Lawford just as quickly as possible, for we are not going to wait all our lives to be married."

"Louise!" gasped Mrs. Conroth with horror. "How can you say such a thing!"

"I mean it," said the girl, nodding with pursed lips.

"You are behaving in a most selfish way," the Lady from Poughkeepsie declared. "Everybody here has remarked how you have neglected me for

"Perhaps," sighed Louise. "But consider, auntie. This is a free and more or less independent republic. After all, money is the only recognized mark of aristocracy."

"Money!"

"Yes. How far would the Perritons' blue blood get them—or the Standishes'—or the Graylings'—without money? And consider our own small beginnings. Your great, great, great grandfather was a knight of the yardstick and sold molasses by the quart."

"You are incorrigible, Louise," cried Aunt Euphemia, her fingers in her ears. "I will not listen to you. It is sacrilegious."

"It's not a far cry," her niece pursued, "from molasses to taffy. And it seems to me one is quite as aristocratic as the other."

So she left Mrs. Conroth in a horrified state of mind and stepped out to face the gale. Seeing others streaming down upon the sands, Louise, too, sought the nearest flight of steps and descended to the foot of the bluff.

This was Saturday and she hoped that Lawford would come for the week-end. It was not Lawford, however, but his father into whose arms she almost stumbled as she came out from under the shelter of the bank into the full sweep of the gale.

"Oh, Mr. Tapp! Why is everybody running so? What has happened?"

The Taffy King had a most puzzling expression upon his face. He glared at her as though he did not hear what she said. In his hand he clutched an envelope.

"Ha! That you, Miss Grayling?" he growled. "Seen Ford?"

"No. Is he at home?"

"He's here fast enough," was I. Tapp's ungracious rejoinder. "I supposed he'd come over to see you."

"Perhaps he has," she returned wickedly. "He is a very faithful knight."

"He's a perfect ninny, if *that's* what you mean," snapped the Taffy King. "He's made a fool of me, too. I shouldn't wonder if he knew this all along," and he shook the letter in his hand and scowled.

"You arouse my curiosity," Louise said. "I hope Lawford has done nothing more to cause you vexation."

"I don't know whether he has or not. The young upstart! I feel like punching him one minute, and then the next I've got to take off my hat to him, Miss Grayling. D'you know what he's done?"

"Something really fine, I hope. I do not think you wholly appreciate Lawford, Mr. Tapp," the girl

But at that Louise merely laughed. "You don't tell me what he has done," she urged.

"Why, the young rascal's solved a problem in mechanics that has puzzled us candy makers for years. I'm having a new cutting machine built after his suggestions."

"I hope Lawford will be properly reimbursed for his idea," she interrupted. "You know, he and I are going to need the money."

"Ha!" snorted I. Tapp again. "Ford's no fool, it seems, when it comes to a contract. He's got me tied hard and fast to a royalty agreement and a lump sum down if the machine works the way he says it will."

"I'm so glad!" cried Louise.

"You are, eh? What for?"

"Because we need not wait so long to be married," she frankly told him.

I. Tapp stood squarely in the path and looked at her.

"So you are going to marry him, whether I agree or not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right in my very teeth?"

"I—I hope you won't be *very* angry, Mr. Tapp," Louise said softly. "You see—we love each other."

"Love!" began I. Tapp. Then he stopped, turning the thick letter over and over in his hand. "Well!" and he actually blew a sigh. "Perhaps

there *is* something in that. Seems to be. I set my heart on having my fortune and my partner's joined by Ford and Dot Johnson—and see what's come of it."

He suddenly thrust the missive into Louise's hand. "Look at that!"

With a growing suspicion of what it meant she opened the outer envelope and then the inner one, drawing out the engraved inclosure. Before she could speak a commotion along the beach drew their attention.

"What can it be?" Louise cried. "The life-savers!"

"And their gear—lifeboat and all," Mr. Tapp agreed. "Must be a wreck——"

His gaze swept the sea and he seized Louise's arm. "There! Don't you see her? A vessel in distress sure enough. She's drifting in upon Gull Rocks. Bad business, Miss Grayling."

"Oh, there is Lawford!" murmured Louise. "He's with the surfmen!"

Two teams of heavy farm horses were dragging the boat and the surfmen's two-wheeled cart along the hard sand at the edge of the surf. The bursting waves wetted all the crew as they helped push the wagons, and the snorting horses were sometimes body deep in the water.

Lawford, in his fishermen's garments, waved his hand to Louise and his father. The girl smiled upon

him proudly and the Taffy King, seeing the expression on her face, suddenly seized the missive from her hand.

"I give up! I give up!" he exclaimed. "I said I'd disown him if he refused to marry Dorothy Johnson, my partner's daughter. But 'tain't really Lawford's fault, I s'pose, if Dot won't marry him. It seems she had other ideas along that line, too, and I never knew it till we got this invitation to her wedding."

Louise smiled on the little man with tolerance. "Of course, I knew you would see it in the right light in time. But it really has been the making of Lawford," she said calmly.

"You think so, do you?" returned the Taffy King. "I wonder what good it would have done him if you hadn't been the prize he wanted? I'm not sure I shouldn't pay you out, Louise Grayling, by making the two of you live for a year on his eighteen dollars a week."

"Are you sure that would be such a great punishment?" she asked him softly.

They moved on with the crowd about the gear and boat. The patrol had come in good season. It was not probable that the schooner would hold together long after she struck the reef.

Not until this moment, when she saw the stern faces of the men and the wan countenances of the women, did Louise understand what the incident

really meant. A few children, clinging to their mother's skirts, whimpered. The men talked in low voices, the women not at all.

Her heart suddenly shorn of its happiness, Louise Grayling stared out at the distant, laboring craft. Death rode on the gale, and lurked where the billows roared and burst over Gull Rocks. The schooner was doomed.

That might be the *Curlew* out there—the schooner her father was aboard—instead of this imperiled vessel. Only the night before she and her uncle had figured out the *Curlew's* course homeward-bound from her last port of call. She might pass in sight of Cardhaven Head and the lighthouse any day now.

The thought sobered Louise. Clinging to I. Tapp's arm she went nearer to the spot where the surfmen had brought their gear and boat.

The sea beyond the line of surf—between the strand and the reef—was foam-streaked and broken, a veritable cauldron of boiling water. The captain of the life-saving crew shrank from launching the boat into that wild waste.

If the line could be shot as far as the reef the moment the schooner struck, a breeches buoy could be rigged with less danger and perhaps with a

shrieked in Louise's ear. "And the wind a-risin'. 'Tis only allowed by law to shoot a sartain charge o' powder in the pottery little gun. Beyond that, is like to burst her. But mebbe they can make it. Cap'n Jim Trainor knows his work; and 'tis cut out for him this day."

Gradually the seriousness of the situation began to affect all the lighter-minded spectators. Louise saw the group of moving picture actors at one side. The men dropped their cigarettes and strained forward as they watched the schooner drive in to certain destruction.

It was like a play. The schooner, rearing on each succeeding wave, drew nearer and nearer. A hawser parted and they saw her bows swing viciously shoreward, the jib-boom thrusting itself seemingly into the very sky as she topped a huge breaker.

The crew had to slip the cable of the second anchor. The foremast came crashing down before she struck. Then, with a grinding thud those on the shore could not hear, but could keenly sense, the fated craft rebounded on the reef.

A gasping cry—the intake of a chorused breath—arose from the throng of spectators. The fishermen and sailors recoiled from the cart and left an open space in which the life-saving crew could handle their gear.

Cap'n Trainor, the grizzled veteran of the crew, had already loaded the gun and now aimed it. The

shot to which was attached the line was slipped into the muzzle.

"Back!" the old man ordered, and waved his hand. Then he pulled the lanyard.

The line fled out of the box with a speed that made it smoke. But the shot fell short.

"'Tis too much wind, skipper," squealed Washy Gallup. "You be a-shootin' into the wind's eye. An' she's risin' ev'ry minute."

His only answer was a black look from Cap'n Trainor. The latter loaded the gun again, and yet again. The last time he waited for every one to get well back before he fired the cannon. When she went off she did not burst as they half expected—she turned a double back somersault.

"'Tis no use, boys!" the captain roared at them, smiting his hands together. "We must try the boat. But that's a hell's broth out there, and no two ways about it."

The stranded schooner, all but hidden at times in the smother of flying spume and jumping waves, hung halfway across the reef. They could see men, like black specks, lashed to her after rigging. Louise, between bursting waves, counted twenty of these figures.

"It may be the *Curlew!*" she cried to the Taffy

"No, no," said I. Tapp. "Not possible. Don't think of such a thing, my girl. But whoever they are, they are to be pitied."

There rose a shout at the edge of the surf. The fringe of fishermen had rushed in to aid in launching the boat. Anscomb and his camera man had taken up a good position with the machine. The director was going to get some "real stuff."

Louise saw that Lawford was foremost among the volunteers. The lifeboat crew, their belts strapped under their arms, had taken their places in the boat. Captain Trainor stood in the stern with his steering oar. On its truck the lifeboat was run into the surf.

"Now!" shrieked the excited moving picture director. "Action! Camera! Go!"

There was something unreal about it—it was like a play. And yet out there on that schooner her crew faced bitter death, while the men of the Coast Patrol took their lives in their hands as the lifeboat was run through the bursting surf.

The volunteers ran in till those ahead were neck deep in the sea. Then the boat floated clear and, with a mighty shove from behind, the surfmen pulled out.

Lawford and his mates staggered back with the gear. The lifeboat lifted to meet the onrolling breakers. The men tugged at the oars.

Somebody screamed. Those ashore saw the white

gash of a split oar. The man in the bow went overboard, not being strapped to the seat. His mate reached for him and the banging broken oar handle hit him on the head.

The boat swung broadside and the next instant was rolling over and over in the surf, the crew half smothered.

The spectators ran together in a crowd. But Lawford and some of the men who had helped to launch the boat rushed into the surf and dragged the overturned craft and her crew out upon the beach.

"One of the crew with a broken arm; another knocked out complete with that crack on the head," sputtered Cap'n Jim Trainor. "Two of my very best men. Come on, boys! Who'll take their places?"

Lawford was already putting on the belt he had unbuckled from about one of the injured surfmen. The Taffy King, seeing what his son was about, shouted:

"Ford! Ford! Don't dare do that! I forbid you!"

Lawford turned a grim face upon his father. "I earn eighteen a week, dad. I am my own boss."

A soft palm was placed upon I. Tapp's lips before he could reply. Louise was weeping frankly, but she urged:

"Don't stop him, Mr. Tapp. Don't say another

Louise saw that Lawford was foremost among the volunteers

word to him. My—my heart is breaking; but I am glad—oh, I am so glad!—that he is a real man."

Cap'n Trainor's hard gaze swept the circle of strained faces about him. After all, the men here were mostly "second raters"—weaklings like Milt Baker and Amiel Perdue, or cripples like Cap'n Joab and Washy Gallup.

Suddenly the captain's gaze descried a figure well back in the crowd—one who had not pushed forward during these exciting moments, but who had been chained to the spot by the fascination of what was happening.

"Ain't that Cap'n Am'zon Silt back there?" demanded the skipper of the lifeboat crew. "You pull a strong oar, I know, Cap'n Am'zon. We need you."

He could pull as strong an oar, despite his years, as any man along the Cape, but never had he gripped the ash save in the haven or in similar land-locked water.

His heart was wrung by the sight of those men clinging to the shrouds of the wrecked schooner. And he rejoiced that the members of the Coast Patrol crew displayed their manhood in so noble an attempt to reach the wreck.

But his very soul was shaken by the spectacle of the storm-fretted sea, and terror gnawed at his vitals when the lifeboat was thrust out into that awful maelstrom of tumbling water.

Relating imaginary events of this character or repeating what mariners had told or written about wreck and storm at sea in the safe harbor of the old store on the Shell Road was different from being an eyewitness of this present catastrophe.

Trembling, the salt tears stinging his eyes more sharply than the salt spray stung his cheeks, the storekeeper had ventured into the crowd of spectators on the sands. So enthralled were his neighbors by what was going forward that they did not notice his appearance.

And well they did not. This character of the bluff and ready master mariner that Cap'n Abe had builded—a new order of Frankenstein—and with which he had deceived the community for these many weeks, came near to being wrecked right here and now.

He all but screamed aloud in fear when the lifeboat was overturned. Pallid, shaking, panting for every breath he drew, he was slipping out of the unnoticing crowd when Cap'n Jim Trainor of the lifeboat crew called to him.

"You pull a strong oar, I know, Cap'n Am'zon. We need you."

For the space of a breath the storekeeper "hung in the wind." He had been poised for flight and the shock of the lifeboat captain's call almost startled him into running full speed up the beach.

Then the thought smote upon his harassed mind that Cap'n Trainor was not speaking to Cap'n Abe, storekeeper. The call for aid was addressed to Cap'n Amazon Silt.

It was to Cap'n Amazon, the man who had been through all manner of perils by sea and land, who

had suffered stress of storm and shipwreck himself, whose reputation for courage the Shell Road storekeeper had builded so long.

Should all this fall in a moment? Should he show the coward's side of the shield after all his effort toward vicarious heroism? Another moment of hesitancy and as Cap'n Amazon Silt he would never be able to hold up his head in the company of Cardhaven folk again.

Cursed by the horror his mother had felt for the cruel sea that had taken her husband before her very eyes, Cap'n Abe had ever shrunk from any actual venture upon deep water. But Cap'n Amazon must be true to his manhood—must uphold by his actions the character the storekeeper had builded for him.

He buttoned his coat tightly across his chest and pushed through the group. Men and women alike made way for him, and in his ringing ears he heard such phrases as:

"*He's* the man to do it!"

"That's Cap'n Am'zon for ye!"

"There's *one* Silt ain't afraid of salt water, whatever Cap'n Abe may be!"

"Will you come, Cap'n Am'zon?" called the skipper of the life-saving crew.

"I'm coming," mumbled the storekeeper, and held

look on Cap'n Amazon's face at that moment prophesied the tragedy that was to follow. "He seen death facin' him—an' he warn't afraid," Milt said reverently.

"In with you, boys!" shouted the skipper. "And hook your belts—every man of you! If she overturns again I want to be able to count noses when we come right side up. Now!"

A shuddering cry from the women, in which Louise found herself joining; a "Yo! heave-ho!" from the men who launched the craft. Then the lifeboat was in the surf again, her crew laboring like the sons of Hercules they were to keep her head to the wind and to the breakers.

The storekeeper was no weakling; rowing was an accomplishment he had excelled in from childhood. It was the single activity in any way connected with the sea that he had learned and maintained.

At first he kept his eyes shut—tight shut. A strange thrill went through him, however. All these years he had shrunk from an unknown, an unexperienced, peril. Was it that Cap'n Abe had been frightened by a bogey, after all?

He opened his eyes, pulling rhythmically with the oar—never missing a stroke. His gaze rested on the face of that old sea-dog, Cap'n Jim Trainor. The fierce light of determination dwelt there. The skipper meant to get to the wrecked schooner. He

had no doubt of accomplishing this, and Cap'n Abe caught fire of courage from the skipper's transfigured countenance.

As for Lawford Tapp, no member of Cap'n Trainor's crew pulled a better oar than he. With the bow ash he drove on like a young giant. Fear did not enter into *his* emotions.

There was nobody to notice the pallor of the storekeeper's visage. Every man's attention was centered on his own oar, while the skipper gazed ahead at the wave-beaten schooner grounded hard and fast upon the reef.

There was no lull in the gale. Indeed, it seemed as though the strength of the wind steadily rose. The lifeboat only crept from the shore on its course to Gull Rocks. Each yard must be fought for by the earnest crew.

Occasionally Cap'n Trainor called an encouraging sentence at them. For the most part, however, only the ravening sea roared malice in their ears.

Around them the hungry waves leaped and fought for their lives; but the buoyant boat, held true to her course by the skipper, bore up nobly under the strain. They won on, foot by foot.

The thunder of the breakers over the reef finally

Cap'n Trainor's straining eyes deciphered her name painted on the bow. He threw a hand upward in a surprised gesture, still clinging to the steering oar with his other hand, and shrieked aloud:

"The *Curlew!* By mighty! who'd ha' thought it? 'Tis the *Curlew.*" He, too, knew of Cap'n Abe's supposed voyage on the seaweed ship.

The oarsmen read the word upon the skipper's lips rather than heard his voice. Two, at least, were shocked by the announcement—Lawford and the storekeeper. There was no opportunity for comment upon this wonder.

Skillfully the lifeboat was brought around under the lee of the wreck. Already most of her crew had crept down to the rail and were waiting, half submerged, to drop into the lifeboat. But one figure was still visible high up in the shrouds.

When the waves sucked out from under her the keel of the lifeboat almost scratched the reef. Then it rose on a swell to the very rail of the wreck, wedged so tightly on the rock.

The castaways came inboard rapidly, bringing their injured skipper with them. The lifeboat was quickly overburdened with human freight.

"No more! No more!" shouted Cap'n Trainor. "We'll have to make another trip."

"Where's the professor? Bring down the professor! There he is!" yelled the mate of the *Cur-*

lew, who had given his attention to the injured m
ter of the wrecked craft. "Who lashed him
up there?"

There was a movement forward. The storekee
had got up and pulled a stout-armed member of
Curlew's crew into his place.

"Take my oar!" commanded Cap'n Abe. "I
a niece—he's her father. Hi-mighty! I just
to get him aboard!"

With an agility that belied his years he leaped
the schooner's rail as the next surge rose.
swarmed inboard and started up the shrouds. Th
below remained silent while he climbed.

He reached the helpless man, whipped out
knife, cut the lashings. Slight as the storekee
seemed, his muscles were of steel. As though
half-conscious professor were a child, he lowe
him to the slanting deck.

"Only room for one o' you!" roared Ca
Trainor. "Only one! We're overloaded as
Better wait."

"You'll take *him!*" shouted Cap'n Abe,
dropped his burden at Lawford Tapp's feet.

The next moment the lifeboat shot away from
side of the wreck, leaving the Man Who
Afraid marooned upon her deck.

she banged upon the beach it was almost a miracle that she did not start all her bottom boards.

Many willing hands hauled the heavy boat up upon the sands. The rescued crew of the schooner tumbled out and lifted their injured captain ashore. But it was Lawford who brought in Professor Grayling. Louise had watched with the Taffy King all through the battle of the lifeboat with the sea, suffering pangs of terror for Lawford's safety, yet feeling, too, unbounded pride in his achievement.

Now she pressed down to meet him at the edge of the sea and found that the drenched, dazed man Lawford bore up in his arms was her own father!

The meeting served to rouse the professor. He stared searchingly over the group of rescued men.

"Where's the man who cut my lashings and helped me down to the deck? I don't see him," he said. "Louise, my dear, this is a very, very strange homecoming. And all my summer's work gone for nothing! But that man——"

"Cap'n Amazon Silt," said Lawford. "He stayed behind. There wasn't room in the boat."

"Cap'n Am'zon!" exclaimed several excited voices. But only one—and that Louise Grayling's—uttered another name:

"Cap'n Abe! Isn't *he* with you? Didn't you bring him ashore?"

"By heaven! that's so, Loui
ford. "They must both be o
brothers are marooned on that
Already the kindly neighbors
castaways in groups of twos and
dwellings. Anscomb was getti
of "the real stuff." The movin
the cottagers hung on the outs
of natives, wide-eyed and marve
on this day, gained a taste of t
life as it is along the shore.
Louise was desirous of gettin
store, for he was exhausted. L
toward the group of life-saving
the beached boat.
"If they can get her launche
me," he shouted back over his
Cap'n Abe and Cap'n Amazon—
"You've done enough, boy,"
clinging to the sleeve of L
"Don't risk your life again."
"Don't worry, dad. A fello
you know."
Betty Gallup came to the assis
helped support the professor.
tenance was all wrinkled with t

seem to rightly sense that Cap'n Abe was with 'em all the time aboard that schooner."

"Poor Cap'n Abe!" groaned Louise again.

"And that old pirate's with him," said Betty. But her tone lacked its usual venom in speaking of Cap'n Amazon. "Who'd ha' thought it? I reckoned he was nothing but a bag o' wind, with all his yarns of bloody murder an' the like. But he is a Silt; no gettin' around that. And Cap'n Abe allus did say the Silts were proper seamen."

"Poor, poor Cap'n Abe!" sobbed Louise.

"Now, now!" soothed Betty. "Don't take on so, deary. They'll get 'em both. Never fear."

But the rising gale forbade another launching of the lifeboat for hours. The night shut down over the wind-ridden sea and shore, and by the pallid light fitfully playing over the tumbling waters the watchers along the sands saw the stricken *Curlew* being slowly wrenched to pieces by the waves that wolfed about and over her.

ON THE ROLL OF HONOR

STRETCHED upon the couch in the living-room behind the store, with Diddimus purring beside him, Professor Grayling heard that evening the story of Cap'n Abe's masquerade. Betty Gallup had gone back to the beach and Louise could talk freely to her father.

"And he saved me, for your sake!" murmured the professor. "He gave me his place in the life-boat! Ah, my dear Lou! there is something besides physical courage in this world. And I don't see but that your uncle has plenty of both kinds of bravery. Really, he is a wonderful man."

"He *was* a wonderful man," said Louise brokenly.

"I do not give up hope of his ultimate safety, my dear. The gale will blow itself out by morning. Captain Ripley is so badly hurt that he is being taken to Boston to-night, and the crew go with him. But if there is interest to be roused in the fate of the last man left upon the wreck——"

"Oh, I am sure the neighbors will do everything in their power. And Lawford, too!" she cried.

"The schooner is not likely to break up before morning. The departure of her crew to-night will make it all the easier for Mr. Abram Silt's secret to be kept," the professor reminded her.

"Yes. We will keep his secret," sighed Louise. "Poor Uncle Abram! After all, he can gain a reputation for courage only vicariously. It will be Cap'n Amazon Silt who will go down in the annals of Cardhaven as the brave man who risked his life for another, daddy-prof."

Aunt Euphemia did not leave The Beaches on this evening, as she had intended. Even she was shaken out of her usual marble demeanor by the wreck and the incidents connected with it. She came to the store after dinner and welcomed her brother with a most subdued and chastened spirit.

"You have been mercifully preserved, Ernest," she said, wiping her eyes. "I saw young Lawford Tapp bring you ashore. A really re-mark-able young man, and so I told Mrs. Perriton just now. So brave of him to venture out in the lifeboat as a volunteer.

"I have just been talking to his father. Quite a re-mark-able man—I. Tapp. One of these rough diamonds, you know, Ernest. And he is so enthusiastic about Louise. He has just pointed out to me the spot on the bluff where he intends to build a cottage for Lawford and Louise."

"What's this?" demanded Professor Grayling,

sitting up so suddenly on the couch that Diddimus spat and jumped off in haste and anger.

"I—I was just going to tell you about Lawford," Louise said in a small voice.

"Oh, yes! A little thing like your having a lover slipped your mind, I suppose?" demanded her father.

"And a young man of most excellent character," put in the surprising Mrs. Conroth. "Perhaps his family is not all that might be desired; but I. Tapp is e-*nor*-mously wealthy and I understand he will settle a good income upon Ford. Besides, the young man has some sort of interest in the manufacturing of candies."

Trust the Lady from Poughkeepsie to put the best foot forward when it became necessary to do so. The professor was gazing quizzically at the flushed face of his daughter.

"So that is what you have been doing this summer, is it?" he said.

"That—and looking after Cap'n Abe," confessed Louise.

"I'll have to look into this further."

"Isn't it terrible?" interrupted Mrs. Conroth. "They say the two brothers are out on that wreck and they cannot be reached until the gale subsides. And then it will be too late to save them. Well, Louise, that old sailor was certainly a brave man. I am really sorry I spoke so harshly about him.

They tell me it was he who put your father in the boat. I hope there is some way you can fittingly show your appreciation, Ernest."

"I hope so," said Professor Grayling grimly.

Lawford came to the store before bedtime—very white and serious-looking. He had tried with the patrol crew to launch the boat again and go to the rescue of the two old men supposed to be upon the wreck. But the effort had been fruitless. Until the gale fell and the tide turned they could not possibly get out to Gull Rocks.

"A brave man is Cap'n Amazon," Lawford Tapp said. "And if Cap'n Abe was in the schooner's crew—— Why, Professor Grayling! surely you must remember him? Not a big man, but with heavy gray beard and mustache—and very bald. Mild blue eyes and very gentle-spoken. Don't you remember him in the crew of the *Curlew?*"

"It would seem quite probable that he was aboard," Professor Grayling returned, "minding his p's and q's," as Louise had warned him. "But you see, Mr. Tapp, being only a passenger, I had really little association with the men forward. You know how it is aboard ship—strict discipline, and all that."

"Yes, sir; I see. And, after all, Cap'n Abe was a man that could easily be overlooked. Not assertive at all. Not like Cap'n Amazon. Quite timid and retiring by nature. Don't you say so, Louise?"

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed the girl. "And yet, when you come to think of it, Uncle Abram is a wonderful man."

"I don't see how you can say so," the young man said. "It's Cap'n Amazon who is wonderful. There were other men down on the beach better able to handle an oar than he. But he took the empty seat in the lifeboat when he was called without saying 'yes or no'! And he pulled with the best of us."

"He is no coward, of that I am sure," said Professor Grayling. "He gave me his place in the boat. We can but pray that the lifeboat will get to him in the morning."

That hope was universal. All night driftwood fires burned on the sands and the people watched and waited for the dawn and another sight of the schooner on the reef.

The tide brought in much wreckage; but it was mostly smashed top gear and deck lumber. Therefore they had reason to hope that the hull of the wreck held together.

It was just at daybreak that the wind subsided and the tide was so that the lifeboat could be launched again. Wellriver station owned no motor-driven craft at this time, or Cap'n Jim Trainor and

boat under the lee of the battered schooner. Her masts and shrouds were overside, anchoring her to the reef. Not a sign of life appeared anywhere upon her.

One of the crew of the lifeboat leaped for the rail and clambered aboard. Down in the scuppers, in the wash of each wave that climbed aboard the wreck, he spied a huddled bundle.

"Here's one of 'em, sure 'nough!" he sang out.

Making his way precariously down the slanting deck, he reached in a minute the spot where the unfortunate lay. The man had washed back and forth in the sea water so long that he was all but parboiled. The rescuer seized him by the shoulders and drew him out of this wash.

He was a very bald man with gray hair, a stubble of beard on his cheeks, and a straggling gray mustache.

"Why, by golly!" yelled the surfman. "This here's Cap'n Abe Silt!"

"Ain't his brother Am'zon there?"

"No, I don't see his brother nowhere."

"Take a good look."

"Trust me to do that," answered the surfman.

But the search was useless. Nobody ever saw Cap'n Amazon again. He had gone, as he had come —suddenly and in a way to shock the placid thoughts of Cardhaven people. A stone in the First Church graveyard is all the visible reminder there remains

of Cap'n Amazon Silt, who for one summer amazed the frequenters of the store on the Shell Road.

The life-savers brought Cap'n Abe, the storekeeper, back from the wreck, the last survivor of the *Curlew's* crew. He was in rather bad shape, for his night's experience on the wreck had been serious indeed.

They put him to bed, and Louise and Betty Gallup took turns in nursing him, while Cap'n Joab Beecher puttered about the store, trying to wait on customers and keep things straight.

At first, as he lay in his "cabin," Cap'n Abe did not have much to say—not even to Louise. But after a couple of days, on an occasion when she was feeding him broth, he suddenly sputtered and put away the spoon with a vexed gesture.

"What's the matter, Uncle Abram?" she asked him. "Isn't it good?"

"The soup's all right, Niece Louise. 'Tain't so fillin' as chowder, I cal'late, but it'll keep a feller on deck for a spell. That ain't it. I was just a-thinkin'."

"Of what?"

"Hi-mighty! It's all over, ain't it?" he said in desperation. "Can't never bring for'ard Cap'n Am'zon again, can I? I *got* to be Cap'n Abe hereafter, whether I want to be or not. It's a turrible dis'pointment, Louise—turrible!

"I ain't sorry I went out there in that boat. No.

For I got your father off, an' he'd been carried overboard if he'd been let stay in them shrouds.

"But land sakes! I *did* fancy bein' Cap'n Am'zon 'stead o' myself. And the worst of it is, Niece Louise, I can't have nothin' new to tell 'bout Cap'n Am'zon's adventures. He's drowned, an' he can't never go rovin' no more."

"But think of what you've done, Cap'n Abe," Louise urged. "You feared the sea—and you overcame that fear. All your life you shrank from venturing on the water; yet you went out in that lifeboat and played the hero. Oh, I think it is fine, Cap'n Abe! It's wonderful!"

"Wonderful?" repeated Cap'n Abe. "P'r'aps 'tis. Mebbe I've been too timid all my life. P'r'aps I could ha' been a sailor and cruised in foreign seas if I'd just *had* to.

"But mother allus was opposed. She kept talkin' against it when I was a boy—and later, too. She told how scar't she was when Cap'n Josh and the *Bravo* went down in sight of her windows. And mebbe I ketched it more from her talkin' than aught else.

"But I never realized that stress of circumstances could push me into it an' make a man of me. I had a feelin' that I'd swoon away an' fall right down in my tracks if I undertook to face such a sea as that was t'other day.

"And see! Nothing of the kind happened! I

knew I'd got to make good Cap'n Am'zon's character, or not hold up my head in Cardhaven again. I don't dispute I've been a hi-mighty liar, Niece Louise. But—but it's sort o' made a man o' me for once, don't ye think?

"I dunno. Good comes out o' bad sometimes. Bitter from the sweet as well. And when a man's got a repertation to maintain—— There was that feller Hanks, on the *Lunette,* out o' Nantucket. I've heard Cap'n Am'zon tell it——"

"Cap'n Abe!" gasped Louise.

"Hi-mighty! There I go again," said the storekeeper mournfully. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks—nor break him of them he's l'arned!"

Louise and her father remained at the store on the Shell Road until Cap'n Abe was up and about again. Then they could safely leave him to the ministrations of Betty Gallup.

"Somehow," confessed that able seaman, "he don't seem just like he used to. He speaks quicker and sharper—more like that old pirate, Am'zon Silt, though I shouldn't be sayin' nothin' harsh of the dead, I s'pose. I don't dispute that Cap'n Am'zon was muchly of a man, when ye come to think on't.

"But Cap'n Abe's more to my taste. Now the place seems right again with him in the house

"One thing puzzles me, Miss Lou. I thought Cap'n Abe would take on c'nsiderable about Jerry. But when I told him the canary was dead he up and said that mebbe 'twas better so, seein' the old bird couldn't see no more. Now, who would ha' told him Jerry was blind?"

There were a few other things about the returned Cap'n Abe that might have amazed his neighbors. He seemed to possess an almost uncanny knowledge of what had happened during the summer. Besides, he seemed to have achieved Cap'n Amazon's manner of "looking down" a too inquisitive inquirer into personal affairs and refusing to answer.

Because of this, perhaps, nobody was ever known to ask the storekeeper why he had filled his sea chest with bricks and useless dunnage when he shipped it to Boston. That mystery was never explained.

Before Louise and her father were ready to leave Cardhaven most of the summer residents along The Beaches, including Aunt Euphemia, had gone. And the moving picture company had also flown.

With the latter went Gusty Durgin, bravely refusing to have her artistic soul trammeled any longer by the claims of hungry boarders at the Cardhaven Inn.

"I don't never expect to be one of these stars on the screen," she confided to Louise. "But I can make a good livin', an' ma's childern by her second husband, Mr. Vleet, has got to be eddicated.

"I'm goin' to make me up a fancy name a make a repertation. They ain't goin' to call 'Dusty Gudgeon' no more. Miss Louder tells I can 'bant'—whatever that is—to take down flesh, and mebbe you'll see me some day, Miss L in a re'l ladylike part. An' I can always cry. E Mr. Bane says I'm wuth my wages when it cor to the tearful parts."

The Tapps were flitting to Boston, Mrs. T and the girls sure of "getting in" with the pro set at last. Their summer's campaign, thanks Louise, had been successful to that end.

Louise and Lawford walked along the strand low the cottages. The candy cutting machine l proved a success and Lawford was giving his att tion to a new "mechanical wrapper" for salt wa taffy that would do away with much hand labor.

On the most prominent outlook of Tapp Pc were piles of building material and men at wc The pudgy figure of I. Tapp was visible walk about, importantly directing the workmen.

"It's going to be a most wonderful hou Louise dear," sighed Lawford. "Do you supp you can stand it? The front elevation looks l a French chateau of the Middle Ages, and th ought to be a moat and a portcullis to make it l

this to live in," with a wide gesture. "The sea and the shore. Cape Cod forever! I shall never be discontented here, Lawford."

They wandered back to the store on the Shell Road. There was a chill in the fall air and Cap'n Abe had built a small fire in the rusty stove. About it were gathered the usual idlers. A huge fishfly droned on the window pane.

"It's been breedin' a change of weather for a week," said Cap'n Joab.

"Right ye air, sir," agreed Washy Gallup, wagging his head.

"I 'member hearin' Cap'n Am'zon tell 'bout a dry spell like this," began Cap'n Abe, leaning his hairy fists upon the counter. "'Twas when he was ashore once at Teneriffe——"

"Don't I hear Mandy a-callin' me?" Milt Baker suddenly demanded, making for the door.

"I gotter git over home myself," said Cap'n Joab apologetically.

"Me, too," said Washy, rising. "'Tis chore time."

Cap'n Abe clamped his jaws shut for a minute and his eyes blazed. Only the mild and inoffensive Amiel was left of his audience.

"Huh!" he growled. "Ain't goin' to waste my breath on *you,* Amiel Perdue. Go git me a scuttle of coal."

Then, when the young fellow had departed, the

storekeeper grinned ruefully and whispered in his